Hafa Adai!

ESGR presents annual awards to CNMI employers. PAGE 4

Norita backs sticking with MPLT on $15M line of credit. PAGE 5

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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LEIGH GASES
Perry A. Inos Jr., center, poses with his 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year award during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.
See more photos on Page 3

Perry A. Inos Jr. is Chamber Business Person of the Year

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Perry A. Inos Jr. took home the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Business Person of

See PERSON on Page 4

Bermudes asked to resign

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

At the instruction of Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, former Department of Public Safety commissioner Clement Bermudes resigned from his post effective last Friday, after about a year on the job.

Palacios

Bermudes

In a memorandum to all department and agency heads

See BERMUDES on Page 4

AS PALACIOS-APATANG ADMINISTRATION MARKS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Palacios: 'Stabilizing government' one of significant feats

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Gov. Arnold I. Palacios delivers a speech during the official launching of the CNMI's Green Growth Initiative in As Perdido last Friday morning.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With the Palacios-Apatang administration turning 1 several weeks ago, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios considers "stabilizing the government" as one of their significant accomplishments

See FEATS on Page 4

IN INVESTIGATION INTO INMATE'S ESCAPE

DOC officers placed on admin leave

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Corrections has placed two of its officers on administrative leave while it investigates how inmate Joey Maratita escaped under their watch last week.

See DOC on Page 4

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Department of Corrections Commissioner Anthony Torres says an Internal Affairs investigation has been launched into the escape of inmate Joey Maratita. Pursuant to the investigation, two DOC officers have been placed on administrative leave.

INSIDE

LOCAL
Guam's Craig Santos Perez became the first Pacific Islander to win a National Book Award.
PAGE 6

BUSINESS
Gold's Gym Saipan proudly announces the launch of the "2024 Gold's Gym Challenge," inviting fitness enthusiasts to register for this transformative 12-week competition.
PAGE 11

WORLD
The United Nations' top court on Friday ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza.
PAGE 13

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

SAIPAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

HAFA ADAI YAN TIROW *Gala*

On behalf of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and the Executive Team, Un Dångkulu na si Yu'us ma'åsi' yan Ghilisow for your support and generosity, you all contributed to the success of our event and the overall success of our organization.

Thank You, Sponsors!

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2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Person of the Year Gala

LEIGH GASES
The 2023 Non-Profit of the Year winner, Autism Society of the CNMI, poses with nominees at the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

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LEIGH GASES
The 2023 Small Business of the Year, The Angry Penne, represented by Vincent Fajardo, center, poses with nominees at the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

LEIGH GASES
The 2023 Sustainable Business of the Year is Caravan of Food, with its representative, center, during the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

LEIGH GASES
The 2023 Chamber Member of the Year, Northern Marianas College, represented by its president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, center, with trophy, poses with nominees at the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-004

COMMONWEALTH DRIVE WATERLINE INSTALLATION PHASE I PROJECT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Commonwealth Drive Waterline Installation Project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of installation of new distribution line along Commonwealth Drive; connecting the new waterline to existing water mains; and installation of a new pressure reducing valve. The work is also inclusive of installation of new service laterals and water meters with individual pressure reducing valves, and relocation or reconnection of existing service laterals to new distribution line also with individual pressure reducing valve. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 270 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 23, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-004, Commonwealth Drive Waterline Installation Phase I Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 14, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at *manny.sablan@cucgov.org* with a copy to Mr. Aristotle Anicete, Project Engineer – via email at *aristotle.anicete@cucgov.org* and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at *christie.sablan@cucgov.org*

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 501521, SAIPAN, MP 95950
TEL: (670) 322-6537/8 • FAX: (670) 322-6548 • E-MAIL: nmidir@ovrgov.net

PUBLIC NOTICE

FY 2024 SRC 1st General Membership Meeting
January 30, 2024 - 5:00pm
World Resort – Sun Flower Room / Zoom

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of FY 2023 SRC & SILC Joint Meeting Minutes of September 21, 2023
V. Review of Membership Vacancies/ Reappointments
- **Vacancies**: Business, Industry and Labor (2 slots); Tinian – Current or Former Recipient – 1 slot).

VI. Reports
(a) SRC Chairperson
- Letter to Governor – Requesting for Local Funding Match
- Sub-Committee Chair Appointments

(b) OVR Director
- New Staff – Organizational Chart
- CSNA
- Unified State Plan

VII. Old Business
a. Orientation and Training – "Acceptance Campaign"

VIII. New Business
IX. Miscellaneous
X. Adjournment

/s/ **Antonelli M. Rosario, Chairperson**

(This Public Notice is paid for by a Grant from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (Grant#H126A240078).)

Local

CHRYSTAL MARINO
Gathering for a photo over 70 US service members and their employers share a smile last Thursday after Guam-CNMI Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's lunch with the boss at the Crowne Plaza in Garapan.

ESGR presents annual awards to CNMI employers

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune
CORRESPONDENT

Five CNMI employers were presented last Thursday with the Secretary of Defense's Patriot Award, recognizing them for going above and beyond in working with their employees who are military reservists.

This fiscal year's Patriot awardees are Division of Environmental Quality director Zabrina Cruz, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Dr. Martin Rohringer, Labor Secretary Leila Staffler, Northern Marianas Housing Corp.'s Wilfred Villagomez, and CNMI Workforce Investment Agency director Frances Torres. The five were nominated by service members under their employment.

In addition, the Above and Beyond corporate award went to the Department of Labor Workforce Investment Agency, and the Seven Seals Award went to David M. Sablan.

The awards are presented by the Guam-CNMI Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve during an event called "Lunch with the Boss." Last Thursday's event took place at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan and was attended by over 70 U.S. service members and their civilian employers, including Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, new CNMI-Guam ESGR chair Cathy Gogue, and several dignitaries.

The occasion highlighted and informed employers and service members of the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act law, and recognized employers who observe that law and go beyond to support not only their military employees, but their country in general, releasing them when called into service and keeping their jobs available for service members upon their return.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

NYMWPS to host free webinar on PH energy security

By JENISHA DUBRALL
jenisha.dubrall321@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

The National Youth Movement for the West Philippine Sea will host a free Zoom webinar on energy security in the Philippines and its impact on the national security of the West Philippine Sea.

The webinar will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024, from 10am to 11:30am Manila time; 12pm to 1:30pm Guam/Saipan time, and on Tuesday Jan. 30, 2024, 4pm to 5:30pm Hawaii time.

The Zoom webinar will be facilitated by the former undersecretary of the Philippines' Department of Energy, Eduardo V. Mañalac.

Mañalac is an exploration geologist and petroleum company executive with more than 35 years of experience. He was appointed as president and CEO of the Philippine National Oil Company in August 2004 as well as the PNOC Exploration Corp. in September 2004. He was also subsequently chairman of the PNOC Energy Development Corp. around the same time that year.

Mañalac received his Bachelor of Science degree in Geology in 1967 from the University of the Philippines in Diliman. There, he also completed post-graduate studies in petroleum geology through 1969.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

BERMUDES

From page 1

last Friday, Palacios informed them that DPS director of administrative service Kay Inos will serve as acting DPS commissioner effective immediately and until further notice.

Bermudes, in a memorandum of his own, stated that Palacios instructed him to resign last Friday at 2:35pm.

"As of 2:45pm, Gov. Palacios instructed me to submit my resignation. Effective 4:30pm, I hereby resign as DPS commissioner," said Bermudes.

In a comment from Bermudes, he said he personally did not want to resign.

Saipan Tribune learned that Bermudes and Palacios have not seen eye to eye in the past on an issue involving DPS Sgt. Peter Camacho.

Camacho is the same officer who filed numerous grievances against DPS with the Civil Service Commission and is now accusing the Civil Service Commission of violating the Open Government Act.

According to a letter addressed to Bermudes last Dec. 22, 2023, Palacios expressed concern over Bermudes' "inconsistency in following [Palacios'] instructions."

"This is to address the recent disciplinary and seemingly retaliatory actions against Sgt. Peter Camacho, which contravened my directives and continues to be an issue. Despite my explicit instructions regarding Sgt. Camacho's assignment at Marianas Regional Fusion Center at the CNMI Department of Homeland [Security], he was purposely issued an AWOL notice and subjected to unwarranted punitive measures. This inconsistency in following my direct instructions and the treatment of Sgt. Camacho is concerning and unacceptable. To be clear, effective immediately, I am hereby ordering the reassignment of Sgt. Peter Camacho to the Marianas Regional Fusion Center at the CNMI Department of Homeland Security, under the direct supervision of Chief Lawrence Camacho. Compliance with this order is mandatory and non-negotiable," the letter stated.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Camacho, through his lawyers, Robert Torres and Oliver Manglona, has filed multiple grievances against DPS, alleging the department violated his due process rights by precluding him from applying for a salary increase.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

PERSON

From page 1

the Year award during SCC's Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

From "being the guy in the back" to being the 2023 Business Person of the Year, Inos, who shared that he worked hard day in and day out in a cubicle in the back, said, "This is to all the guys in the back who are not recognized—who are not even seen. But if you put yourselves out there, you'll be surprised."

The 37-year-old Inos is managing director and partner of AP Group and its affiliates. His ventures include DreamPlay, Marianas Pharmacy, Tapped Out, and Napu Brewing Co. He is also involved in the creation of affordable housing through Vista Homes and in a financial technology venture, Nakamoto Financial under NF Xpress.

The award's other nominee is Emma Perez, president of 500 Sails, a non-profit organization that's working to revive the CNMI's maritime tradition.

In his speech after being named Business Person of the Year, Inos said the award is for his Rota roots as much as it is for himself. He also dedicated the award to his parents, his wife, and children.

He thanked everyone who believed in him, and his wife, and their children. "...Their endless patience, encouragement, understanding, the strength that I have on a daily basis—it's really on family and friends, and all the positive affirmations that come from them day in and day out. When everybody's saying 'Oh, it's hard times', 'What are you doing, are you crazy?' …Without them and their support, this journey would not even be possible."

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

DOC

From page 1

According to DOC Commissioner Anthony Torres, an Internal Affairs investigation has been launched into the escape of Maratita, who managed to elude his two DOC escorts while he was being treated at the Commonwealth Health Center last Wednesday, Jan. 24.

Maratita was captured the next day near the old Japanese jail and has since been charged for his escape.

"An Internal Affairs investigation has been initiated and the officers involved with escorting the inmate have been placed on administrative leave pending further investigation," Torres said.

In addition, Torres reiterated that an after-action plan is forthcoming.

That typically involves a comprehensive review of the circumstances surrounding the event and aims to identify areas for improvement to prevent similar incidents in the future, he said.

Part of the after-action plan, said Torres, is review and analysis.

"Review and analysis [includes] gathering of all available information about the escape, security vulnerabilities, response procedure [and] analyzing the sequence of events leading up to the escape and the immediate actions taken to address it," he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

FEATS

From page 1

in that one-year period.

In response to *Saipan Tribune*'s question on Friday, Palacios also cited continuing to pay the retirees' pension benefits and the Public School System as among their other major accomplishments. He said they were also able to continue to pay government employees across the island.

"We [are going to] be providing immediate help to the community, our tourism," said Palacios, adding that they will continue to have dialogues with federal agencies on how they can leverage those resources.

"And those are going to happen soon rather than later," the governor added.

When asked about the administration's priorities in 2024, Palacios said they want to finish all the infrastructure development.

He said they want to bring the business community to a better place and get new investment into the Commonwealth.

"A good infrastructure is very critical. That's something that not only the local leadership or I want, but also regional leaders and regional business," Palacios said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

Norita backs sticking with MPLT on $15M line of credit

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Norita

Finance Secretary Tracy B. Norita said yesterday that, since the $15-million line of credit with the Marianas Public Land Trust is already moving forward, she would recommend that the CNMI government keep to this initiative instead of pursuing other means to acquire the necessary funds.

In response to a question by Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan) during the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee hearing, Norita said they've spent a lot of time already in discussions about this MPLT line of credit, developed processes and procedures, and they have already looped in the U.S. Economic Development Authority.

"So we are in the interest of moving the projects forward. Every day counts for our vendors or contractors. We just want to move the projects forward," she said.

Norita's statement was in response to an earlier question raised by private citizen Liana Hofschneider if the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority had also been considered as an institution to request for a loan or line of credit.

Norita appeared before the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee to testify on House Bill 23-95, House Substitute 1, which is a bill that repeals and re-enacts a just-enacted law that authorizes a $15-million line of credit with the MPLT.

Aside from Norita, MPLT board of trustee chair Phillip Long and Office of Planning and Development director Elizabeth Balajadia also testified before the committee.

Norita said to restart and look for another financing source—if they must—could be done, but the MPLT line of credit is already an opportunity to move forward with many infrastructure projects in the CNMI

"We are so close. And so this would be the avenue that we would support," Norita said.

He said if this legislation is not amended, MPLT is going to be placed in a very tenuous spot to where they would not be able to enter into an agreement with the administration. Long said this particular loan pins MPLT at 5.5% interest but has a much larger risk profile than a U.S. Treasury.

"So you're exactly on point in pointing out…that there would be a significant opportunity loss," said the chairman in response to a question.

Sen. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), who chairs the committee, continued the meeting to today at 2:30pm, Friday, and requested Norita to return.

Last Nov. 20, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios signed House Bill 23-77, Senate Draft 1, into Public Law 23-12 to authorize the $15-million line of credit. However, the House of Representatives saw a need to fix the new law; this prompted Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) to introduce House Bill 23-95, HS1. The House passed it and the bill is now before the Senate.

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month proclamation signing on Rota this Feb. 1

The Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence and community partners cordially invites the community to the Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month proclamation signing ceremony on Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024, at 10:30am. The event will be held at the Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School in Songsong, Rota.

The ceremony officially marks February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in the CNMI. The ceremony will be livestreamed in partnership with KUAM and will be available for viewing on their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/kuamnews.

Led by middle and high school students, the event will feature an engaging program of emceeing, presentations, short skits, performances, and guest speakers—a youth driven initiative for awareness and support. "Empowering the youth and the next generation starts with awareness. Our goal for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month is to illuminate, uplift, and promote a future where love is built on respect, understanding, and kindness," said NMCADSV Program coordinator and TDVAM chair Grace S. Veleña.

In addition to the ceremony, NMCADSV will conduct school presentations throughout the month of February, contributing to a comprehensive educational effort.

NMCADSV is also pleased to announce the upcoming hosting of two KKMP shows, featuring public discussions led by diverse teen speakers addressing topics related to teen dating violence. Listeners are encouraged to tune in to 92.1 FM at 8am on both Feb. 14 and Feb. 28, 2024. All broadcasting details will be shared on NMCADSV's social media accounts, ensuring widespread access to these meaningful conversations.

Moreover, NMCADSV is thrilled to present its signature event, the "Know Your Worth" Art, Essay, and Spoken Word Competition, specifically tailored for middle school and high school students currently enrolled in the CNMI. Don't miss the opportunity to showcase your talents—submissions are welcome until 5pm, on Friday, Feb. 2, 2024. The live competition, featuring the final round of participants in the Spoken Word Category, is scheduled to take place at the Hyatt Regency Ballroom on Thursday, Feb. 29, 2024, at 6pm. Ensure you don't miss the exhilarating moment when winners across the Art, Essay, and Spoken Word categories will be officially announced. Open to the public, seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Come and extend your support for the exceptionally talented youth of the CNMI!

Stay informed with real-time updates on all things TDVAM by following NMCADSV on social media @EndViolenceNMI. If you have any inquiries or need further information, please contact NMCADSV directly at (670) 234-3878 or via email at info@endviolencenmi.org. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS
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Tel. No (670) 234-3751/52/52 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Facebook: facebook.com/DPLCNMI

NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public land in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested parties of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published.

i. The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot 011 L 03, containing an area of approximately 241,037 square meters, Lot 011 L 04, containing an area of approximately 337,564 square meters, and Lot 011 L 02 R/W, containing an area of approximately 2,984 square meters situated in Unai Dankulu, Saipan. A map showing the location of the parcel is available at the Department of Public Lands for inspection.

ii. The prospective Lessee is Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort. The list of officers for Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort: Hosik (Brian), Shin, as President, Eunpyung (Calvin), Park, as Vice President and Ji Eun Lee, as Secretary/ Treasurer.

Principal shareholders of Suwaso Corporation is Micronesia Resort, Inc.

iii. The proposed lease is compliant with DPL regulations and was negotiated by the officers and directors of Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort, mainly by Hosik (Brian) Shin and Gloria Cavanaugh.

iv. The Lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of a Hotel and Golf Complex.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 40 years with an extension of up to 15 years with approval of the Legislature in accordance with P.L. 20-84 (1 CMC § 2806(c)(1)).

The proposed annual rental during the term of the lease agreement is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property plus the applicable percentage of Business Gross Receipts in DPL's regulation.

A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the office of the Department of Public Lands, located on the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan; 1st floor of the De'Ana Commercial Building, Songsong Village, Rota; or the 1st floor of the PM Building, Tinian. A copy will also be available online at www.dpl.gov.mp

v. The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land in Unai Dangkulu, Saipan.

vi. The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before February 12, 2024, at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian. A public hearing will be held if requested during the comment period.

NUTISIA PUT I MAPROPONI NA ATKILON TÅNU´ PUPBLIKU

Sigun gi Seksiona 106 (b) gi Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku mannånå'i huyung nutisia guini put i intension-ñiha para u ma'atkila metton na tanu' pupbliku giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Mariånas. Maseha håyi na pattidå intirisao gi halum hiniråt pupbliku siña muna'hålum upiñon, infotmasion, pat testimoniun kinontra gi tinahguin prinoponi siha para i atkilon nu i tanu' pupbliku. Komu mapribeni mås mo'na ginin i Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i tinattitiyi pettanesi na infotmasion manisisita para u mapupblika.

i. I maproponi na atkilon tanu' pupbliku madiskribi komu Lot 011 L 03 ni kunsissisti kåsi 241,037 square meters, Lot 011 L04, ni kunsissisti kåsi 337,564 square meters, yan Lot 011 L02 R/W, ni kunsissisti kåsi 2,984 square meters ni gaigi gi hålum Unai Dangkulu, iya Saipan. I måpa ni ina'a'annuk i lugåt managuaha gi ufisinan Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku para inspeksión.

ii. I prospective lessee i Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort. I listan nu ufisiåt siha para i Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort: Si Hosik (Brian), Shin, komu Presidenti, Eunpyung (Calvin), Park, komu Sigundu Presidenti yan si Ji Eun Lee, komu Sekritåriu/Tresureru.

I prinsipåt na shareholders nu Suwaso Corporation sa i Micronesia Resort, Inc.

iii. I maproponi na atkilon ha tattiyi i regulasion DPL siha yan ginen manegosiu ni ufisiåt yan direktot nu Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort, mayotmenti ginen as Hosik (Brian), Shin yan si Gloria Cavanaugh.

iv. I lessee debi na u usa i lugåt put atyu ha' na rason nu i Hotel and Golf Complex.

I tema nu i maproponi na kontråtan atkilon sa' kuarenta (40) åñus na tiempu yan i ekstensión asta kinsi åñus na tiempu yan i inaprueban i Lehislatura sigun yan i P.L. 20-84 (1 CMC § 2806(c)(1)).

I maproponi na atkilon gi kada' såkkan gi durântin teman kontråtan i` atkilon mapega gi put sientus i bålin "appraised fair market" i propiedåt yan i aplikåo na put sientus nu i "Business Gross Receipts" gi halum i regulasion DPL.

v. I kopian nu i maproponi na kuntråtan atkilon siña machuli' gi ufisinan i Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku, ni gaigi gi sigundu (2nd) na bibiendan i Joeten Dandan Commercial Building iya Dandan, Saipan, primet (1st) na bibiendan i De'Ana Commercial Building, iya Songsong Village, Luta; pat i primet (1st) na bibiendan i PM Building, giya Tini'an. I kopia debi lokkui' na u managuaha online gi www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. I Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku tåya marisibi ni håfa na tinahguin inofresi siha ni para u ma'atkila i suhetu na tanu' pupbliku gi Unai Dangkulu, giya Saipan.

vii. I Sekritåriun Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku debi na u aksepta tinigi' upiñon, infotmasion, testimoniun kinontra pat tinahguin prinoponi siha ginin i manintirisão na pattida siha gi pat åntis di Fibreru 12, 2024, gi ufisinan Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha ni gaigi giya Sa'ipan, Luta pat Tini'an. I inekkunguk pupbliku siempri magopti yanggin marikuesta gi durânti i tiempun upiñon.

ARONGORONGOL PPWOMMWOL ATKILÓÓNOL FALUWEER TOULAP

Sángi Tálil 106 (b) reel Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re isiisiwow arongorong igha re mángemángil rebwe atkkilaay faluweer toulap llól Seipél, Commonwealth Téél Falúw kka Efáng llól Marianas. Schóó kka re tipáli sángi toulap emmwel rebwe isiisilong ischil kkapas, data, views, ngare angiingil ppwomm ikka aa siiwel ngáli ppwommwol atkkilóónol faluweer toulap. Re bwal ayoora sángi Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, arongorong ikka e ffil ebwe akkatééwow e amwirimwiritiw:

i. Ppwommwol atkkilóónol faluweer toulap e bwáá bwe Lot 011 L 03, e lo 241,037 reel square meters, Lot 011 L 04, iye e lo bwe 337,564 reel square meters, me Lot 011 L 02 R/W, iye e lo bwe 2,984 reel square meters iye e lo Unai Dankulu, Seipél. E bwáálló wóól móópal falúw eyoor me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap reel ubwe amwuri.

ii. Ppwommwol schóól atkkilóón nge Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Point. List-al officers ngáli Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Point: Mr. Hosik (Brian), Shin, bwe President, Eunpyung (Calvin), Park Liang, bwe Vice President me Ji Eun Lee, bwe Sekkretóóriyo/Treasurer.Principal shareholder-il Suwaso Corporation nge Micronesia Resort, Inc.

iii. Ppwommwol atkkilóón e angúúngú fengál me mwóghutughutúl DPL me e abwungubwung sángi officers me directors-il Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Point, spesiatmente Hosik (Brian) Shin me Gloria Cavanaugh.

iv. Schóól atkkilóón ebwe yááyá falúw ngáli Hotel and Golf Complex. Ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón nge fááigh ráágh fengál me aláálááyi ngáli seigh me limoow ráágh fengál me átirowal Sou Alléghl (Legislature) llól angúúngú fengál me P.L 20-84 (1 CMC § 2806(c)(1)).Ppwommwol atkkilóón ghal ráágh atol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón yeel nge e lo reel percentage of the appraised fair market value reel falúw fengál me application percentage of Gross Receipts llól mwóghutughutúl DPL.

v. Pappidil ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón nge emmwel ubwe bweibwogh me reel Bwualsiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap me 2nd floor me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building me Dandan, Seipél; 1st floor me De'Ana Commercial Building, me Apilómwol Songsong, Luuta; me 1st floor me PM Building, Tchiliyól. Ebwal yoor pappid emmwel ubwe amwuri online me www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap rese bweibwogh siiwelil ppwommw reel atkkilóónol faluweer toulap iye e lo Unai Dangkulu, Seipél.

vii. Sekkretóóriyal Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re bweibwogh ischil kkapas, views, angiingi ngare siiwelil ppwommw sángi schóó kka re mwuschel wóól ngare mmwalil Febreero 12, 2024, me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap iye e lo Seipél, Luuta ngare Tchiliyól. Rebwe ayoora arongorongol toulap ngare re tingór atol mille comment period.

The first Pacific Islander to win a National Book Award talks colonialism, culture, and climate

By ANITA HOFSCHNEIDER
Grist

Editor's Note: This story was originally published by Grist. *Sign up for* Grist*'s weekly newsletter.*

CANDICE NOVAK; UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

Craig Santos Perez's book of poems called *[åmot]* has won a National Book Award. Photo taken from https://grist.org/

There's a scene in Craig Santos Perez's book of poems from an unincorporated territory, *[åmot]*, that feels eerily familiar. The author, an English professor at the University of Hawai'i, is walking through the San Diego Zoo when he sees a caged Guam *sihek*, an endangered native kingfisher bird of Guam.

Perez was born and raised on Guam, but this is the first time that he's seeing the bird in real life, with its blue tail, green wings, and orange and white feathers. The creatures no longer live in Guam's jungles, decimated by invasive brown tree snakes brought by U.S. military ships. Like many other CHamorus from Guam, Perez grew up accustomed to the silence of native birdsong.

Like Perez, I'm indigenous to the Marianas, and even though I grew up on a neighboring island, I spent a lot of time on Guam as a kid. Back then, snake-induced power outages felt normal, and so did the birds' absence. It wasn't until I was in college, walking through the Bronx Zoo, when I too saw the *sihek*, imprisoned for its own survival thousands of miles away from home. It felt jarring.

Even stranger is the feeling of seeing my language and experiences reflected in a book, especially one that's highly acclaimed. Last month, Perez became the first Pacific Islander to win a National Book Award, standing in a suit at the New York City awards ceremony in front of a crowd that included Oprah. The next day, 8,000 miles away on Guam, WhatsApp threads lit up with the YouTube clip of his acceptance speech in which he thanked the crowd in CHamoru.

That distance is part of what made that award feel so momentous. In his poetry, Perez grapples with the invisibility of Guam ("Are you a citizen?"), the ongoing legacy of colonialism, the consequences of continuing militarization, and the ever-ascending threat of rising seas. "The rape of Oceania began with Guam," he quotes at one point.

There's a heavy grief in his exploration of what CHamorus have lost, and stand to lose with climate change, and a more personal grief embedded in his poetry about his grandparents, who passed away during the writing of the book. But there's also a lightness to his work, especially in his lists of modern-day åmot, or medicine, for stateside CHamorus feeling mahålang for home.

I spoke with Perez last week to hear his reflections on the book and how his poetry relates to climate change, environmental justice, and the broader experiences of Indigenous peoples. This interview has been condensed and edited.

Q. You've mentioned that you're writing for yourself and your family and our people, but you're also writing for the broader global community in the U.S. and beyond. One of the challenges that Indigenous people face is the way our stories are often erased from history, or in the case of Indigenous Pacific peoples, we are literally relegated to the margins of maps or footnotes in textbooks. What do you see as your book's role within that broader context?

A. So much of my work is about making the struggles of our people visible, and the history and politics of Guam, in particular, visible, on a national and international stage. That's a way for me to write against the erasure of Pacific Islander histories specifically and Indigenous histories in general. I've been so inspired by Native American writers for decades writing against their own erasure and raising their voices to highlight issues facing their own communities, and so I wanted to do the same thing with my own work. And as you know, the connection to the environment, to lands and waters is a core component of Indigenous identity and culture, and so I wanted to always have that at the forefront.

When our homelands and our peoples are invisibilized it makes it easier for colonial nations or corporations to exploit us and to turn our homelands into sacrifice zones. But when we expose these issues, that creates a way for us to not only cultivate empathy for our struggles, but also to establish alliances and solidarity with other communities who have experienced similar kinds of environmental justice issues. And then I think it also empowers our own people to continue to keep fighting and struggling for justice. And so for me, poetry and storytelling play a pivotal role in the environmental justice movement.

Q. Your poem about the Guam sihek resonated with me because I had the same experience at the Bronx Zoo: encountering the bird in a cage thousands of miles away from home, that I had never seen or heard in the wild, and feeling struck by the irony and sadness of it. Can you share more about that experience and what you were hoping to convey with your writing?

A. Growing up on Guam when I did was the time when the birds were all disappearing, and zookeepers came in and "saved" the last remaining wild birds. I don't have any memory of the native birds in Guam at all besides just studying them in school and looking at pictures in the classroom. And so when I did see that bird for the first time at the San Diego Zoo, it was similarly kind of an uncanny experience. I'm still kind of processing the depths of what I felt in that moment. Part of it was just feeling the deep loss of extinction, endangerment, extirpation, and so on, but at the same time feeling this deep sense of survival and resilience.

I wanted to also honor the birds in the same way I would honor my grandparents in the poems. I was thinking about extinction, not just a species loss, but also as a whole matrix of loss: the cascade that happens in the jungles, the rainforest, what happens when birds are disappeared from the landscape? What happens to the people who are close to these birds when they're gone? The birds have deep meaning in our culture and still have meaning today. But obviously, these are different things when they're no longer wild.

Q. One of your poems describes how "mapmakers named our part of the ocean 'Micronesia' because they viewed our islands and cultures as small and insignificant." Then you list the empires that have taken over our islands, and their effects, a sort of progression of colonization, and at the very end you describe our islands slipping under rising seas. What were you thinking about when you started this poem about colonization and ended it with climate change?

A. Colonialism has led to the environmental destruction of our home islands: Our islands are often used for very extractive industries, whether it's plantation agriculture in Hawai'i or on Guam, the military using our lands and waters for bases and military testing, and so on. All of these industries are fossil fuel-based, and they've all led directly to the rising sea levels and all the other climate change impacts that we see in the Pacific and globally. Things that we need to do to change this, they're almost impossible to implement because, whether our islands are still colonized or in terms of the independent Pacific, they all exist within these neocolonial capitalist frameworks. And so in order to address climate change, we need to also reckon with the legacy and ongoing impacts of colonialism. And so for me, it's always been important to be part of the decolonization movement alongside environmental justice and climate justice, because it's all connected.

Q. Another poem you wrote that resonated with me was about how diasporic CHamorus become foreign in their own homelands after leaving, as their islands change and grow strange to them. I was wondering if you could talk about what an acceleration of outmigration due to worsening storms and other climate change impacts could mean for our people and our culture.

A. In the beginning of the highlighting of the Pacific in climate change discourse, there was a lot of rhetoric about, "If Pacific Islanders are forced to move from our homelands, we're nothing, we're nothing without our islands," which was a rhetorically powerful rallying cry. But my critique of that is, that's true, but at the same time, we have to look at our diasporic Pacific communities. Even when we leave our homelands, we're not nothing. We don't just become dead souls, but we still carry our culture with us, even if we've been forced to migrate. Obviously it's tragic, when and if we have to migrate because of climate change and we have to do everything to, of course, prevent that, so that we can stay in our homelands. But at the same time, if that future does come, I think we know it's important for us to highlight the strength of our diaspora communities and to have faith in our people that we will be able to maintain our cultures and languages even if we're forced to leave home.

Q. Speaking of language, I noticed that throughout your book you deliberately included many CHamoru words and phrases. For Native peoples, the speaking of our languages is often in and of itself a political act because of how they've been suppressed. What went into your decision and what did you hope to accomplish?

A. Through poetry, I found the space where I could kind of reclaim the language even if it's just single words or simple phrases or even quotes from the rosary in CHamoru, for example. For me, poetry, like a lot of Native poetry, became a space of language reclamation in the face of the long history of language colonialism and erasure.

I actually read a study that found that there's a relationship between biodiversity loss and language loss. And part of the thesis was that because, let's say, a rainforest in the Amazon is being cut for timber or something and a lot of those tribes are being displaced, forced to move to the city, and in the city they have to speak Spanish or some other colonial language.

There are a lot of narratives of doom and extinction like that. But I think there are a lot of Indigenous people, despite displacement and colonialism, they're still able to be resilient and maintain culture and language within diasporic spaces. Not ideal, but I think it speaks to the power of Indigenous peoples.

Q. Throughout your book, you write a lot about your grandmother: playing bingo with her, watching her rub achiote seeds to make red rice, listening to her speak CHamoru. Can you tell me more about her? When you think about the brutal Japanese occupation that her generation experienced during World War II and subsequent loss of land to the U.S. military, how do you see it relating to the challenges that our children's generation will face?

A. She was 19, I think, at the beginning of the occupation. And during the march to Mañenggon, she was actually pregnant with what would have been her first child. But unfortunately, during the march, she had a miscarriage. I will always be struck by her resilience to wrap her fetus in banana leaves and carry her daughter the rest of the way on that march and go on and keep living life. She was a very soft-spoken woman and very devout, of course.

I can't even fathom what that generation went through during that time. Not only did they experience the war and the occupation and all of that sudden violence, but then also just the slow violence after that of the military taking over so much land, displacing so many families from their ranches and from their sources of sustenance, forcing them to speak English in school and just the whole violence of colonial education and acculturation. Just imagining the changes she saw in our island from the 1920s all the way up to just a few years ago across her 96 years of life. Even though we're facing another slow violence with climate change, I do think at least my generation can learn from that generation how to endure, how to survive, but also how to be resilient and to keep fighting for what we believe in. My grandma wasn't some kind of radical activist or decolonial activist or anything like that. But she definitely loved our culture and instilled a love for everything CHamoru in us. We have different struggles to fight, but the similarity is to continually fight for what we love, and to do everything we can to protect our families and to give our kids the best life possible while still trying to maintain our cultures.

This article originally appeared in Grist at https://grist.org/culture/first-pacific-islander-win-national-book-award-guam/. Grist is a nonprofit, independent media organization dedicated to telling stories of climate solutions and a just future. Learn more at Grist.org.

Marianas conducts media blitz across Korea

With the goal of increasing awareness of the Marians and increase airline ticket sales and load factors, the Marianas Visitors Authority is conducted a media blitz nationwide in its primary source market of Korea.

The blitz, commenced three months ago, contributed to 73% recovery of visitor arrivals from Korea in 2023 compared to pre-pandemic levels, including higher than average bookings of the destination late last year. As a result, by mid-December T'way had already sold 98% of their available seats for the month, while Jeju Air had sold 94%.

The nationwide promo emphasizes the unique attractions of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota and utilized various platforms, including ads on popular social media platforms NAVER, Google, Kakao, Skyscanner, and Meta. The outreach resulting in 50 million impressions in the first three months of the campaign and a significant 18% conversion rate as users clicked to enter a sweepstakes for a chance to win a roundtrip ticket from Seoul to Saipan by learning about and voting for their favorite island, "Fantastic Saipan," "Energetic Tinian," or "Romantic Rota."

MVA

Anamorphic ads featuring the Marianas are on display in Seoul this month as part of a nationwide media campaign by the Marianas Visitors Authority.

MVA

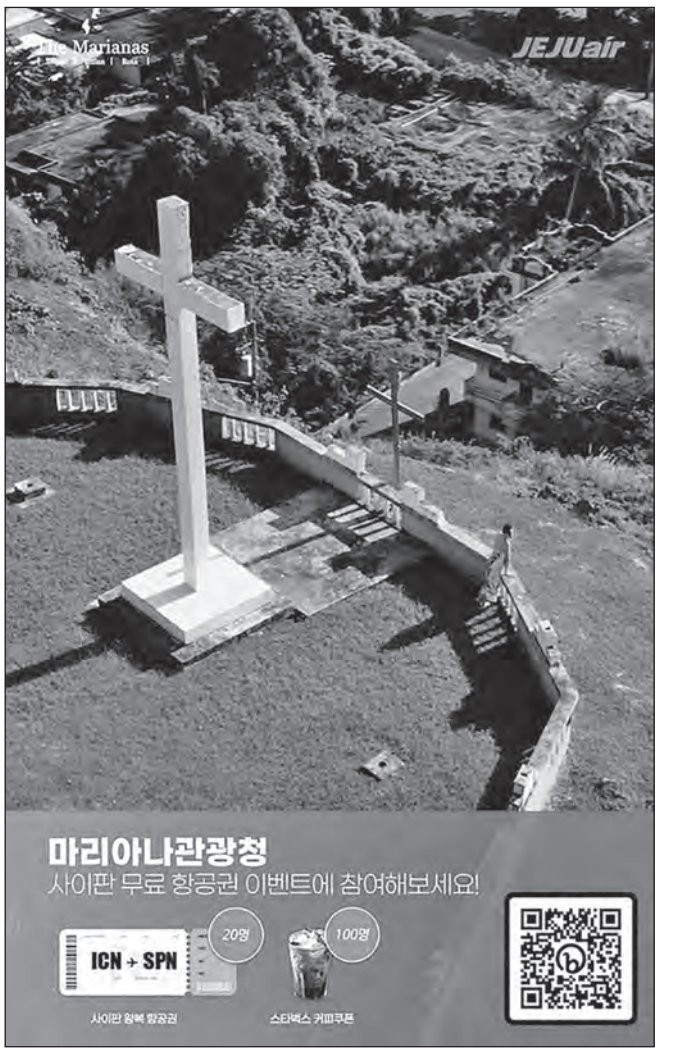
Digital ads promoting Saipan, Tinian, and Rota in the Marianas are placed in 16 subway stations in Seoul, Korea, during Winter 2023.

The campaign also included the placement of digital banners in 16 subway stations and the elevators of apartment buildings in Seoul. In addition, huge anamorphic ads are now running on popular Gangnam Street, hot spot Hongik University Street, and near city hall.

"The ongoing media blitz in Korea is leveraging the most effective promotions our team can conceptualize, and the results have been exceptional," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "We are working strategically under funding through the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery to maximize our exposure and keep the Marianas top-of-mind for today's traveler in Korea, especially during these cold winter months."

The campaign has also focused on promotion of the destination through major social media platforms, search engine optimization, and driving traffic to the official MVA website in Korea. As a result, the website has gained 74,000 new users—945% higher than last year—and 1,511% more visitors than last year.

Ongoing ads through the end of January are encouraging viewers to choose the Marianas as their winter travel destination using enticing destination photos and articles. ***(MVA)***



MVA

Digital ads promoting Saipan, Tinian, and Rota in the Marianas are placed in apartment building elevators throughout Seoul, Korea, during Winter 2023.

Kayoko Nakayama named Marianas tourism ambassador

Professor Kyoko Nakayama of Teikyo University in Japan has been named Marianas honorary tourism ambassador for her long-standing enthusiasm for and promotion of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota as part of her work teaching about Japanese historical ties to the Marianas.

Nakayama, who is a professor with the Facility of Education at Teikyo University, received a plaque commemorating her appointment last Tuesday, Jan. 23, from Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion in Tokyo.

"I love the Marianas," said Nakayama following the presentation. "There are many stories of history between Japan and the (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). And then there is the beautiful Mariana culture and environment. I would like to continue to share these things with the Japanese people."

MVA

Teikyo University professor Kyoko Nakayama, center, receives her plaque of appointment as Marianas honorary tourism ambassador on Jan. 24, 2024, in Tokyo, Japan, from Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion, right, and MVA Community Projects manager Martin Duenas, left.

MVA

Marianas honorary tourism ambassador Kyoko Nakayama performs an original composition in the Chamorro language on Jan. 24, 2024, at Teikyo University in Tokyo, Japan. Nakayama teaches about Japanese historical ties with the Marianas and is an avid promoter of the islands in and outside the classroom. She was presented with a plaque commemorating her appointment by Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion.

Concepcion and MVA Community Projects manager Martin Duenas visited Nakayama at Teikyo University, which has 40,000 students at multiple campuses across Japan. At her plaque presentation, Nakayama wore a "sinahi" necklace and played the guitar and sang three original compositions in the Chamorro language.

"Professor Nakayama has a wealth of information about the Marianas, which she has been sharing with great enthusiasm with her students and others," said Concepcion, who first learned about the professor and her work while watching a show on NHK several months ago. "She's been visiting our islands for over 20 years and has many personal friends here, including the Cabrera family—familian Esco, the Marcianos, the Sablans, and others. She is a very kind, welcoming, and bubbly person and truly loves the Marianas, a wonderful ambassador for our islands."

Nakayama is also working on an exhibit, "The Truth of Tropical Islands," about the Marianas and Guam at Teikyo University Museum, highlighting Japanese historical ties in the Marianas. The exhibit will be open from May 18 to Aug. 16, 2024. ***(MVA)***

Proposed WIOA Unified State Plan open for public comment

This is to notify the public and interested parties that the Governor's State Workforce Development Board is seeking comments on the CNMI's 2024-2027 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan.

The public comment period begins on Jan. 19, 2024, at 8am and ends on Feb. 17, 2024, at 5pm.

Every four years, the CNMI submits a comprehensive state plan to the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education. This unified state plan serves as the blueprint of the CNMI's workforce development efforts for the WIOA core programs. The plan outlines strategic initiatives to assist CNMI residents, including youths and those facing barriers to employment, discover quality jobs opportunities and build lasting careers. Simultaneously, the aim is to support employers in hiring and retaining skilled workers.

The core partners of the CNMI's Public Workforce System, consisting of the DOL Workforce Investment Agency, NMC Adult Education State Office, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation administers the following WIOA programs in this unified plan:

- WIOA Title I Adult Program
- WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program
- WIOA Title I Youth Program
- WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program
- WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The plan is available online at: www.marianaslabor.net, www.cnmiwioa.gov.mp or www.ovrgov.net and a hard copy may be obtained from any of the core partners or the affiliated sites of the DOL Workforce Investment Agency below:

- Carolinian Affairs Office
- San Vicente Youth Center
- Kagman Community Center
- Northern Marianas Technical Institute
- Tinian Department of Labor
- Rota Department of Labor

To submit comments, email cnmiswdb@dol.gov.mp or deliver written comments to any of the affiliated sites by 5pm on Feb. 17, 2024.

Feedback from all community members is welcomed to help shape our workforce system for the future. ***(PR)***

Opinion

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MIKE SMITH
LAS VEGAS SUN 2024
AND THE FINANCIAL ANALYSTS KEPT SAYING THAT A RECESSION WAS COMING.
CHICKEN LITTLE

EDITORIAL

Federal shield law would serve journalists and the public interest

It's a rare day when federal lawmakers outpace their Virginia counterparts in solving a problem, but the U.S. House's passage of a federal shield law for journalists may see Congress do precisely that.

Protecting members of the media from legal interloping into their sources and communications is essential to a free press, and the House should be commended for its action. Now the Senate, including Virginia Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, should follow suit in passing this essential legislation.

Though the Founding Fathers enshrined press freedom in the First Amendment, only a decade passed before Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts to limit speech critical of the government, including by journalists. American history is rife with instances of media speaking truth to power—and power lashing out in response.

Journalism—and, in turn, the public's understanding of their communities—depends on the free and open exchange of facts. Some of the most compelling and important stories hinge on unsavory characters, illegal activities or earnest citizens who may face punishment for speaking to the media.

To write a story about fentanyl use, for instance, might find a reporter speaking to drug users and dealers. Stories about abortion may now put journalists in touch with those violating the law. Write about corruption in government and many sources will only speak if assured of anonymity.

It's critical, then, that journalists be protected from prosecution for their work and, broadly, should not be compelled to disclose sources or sensitive information. The Supreme Court agreed in 1972 when, in Branzburg v. Hayes, the justices decided that a reporter for The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Kentucky, couldn't be compelled by a grand jury to reveal two sources for an article about illegal drug use.

That precedent has been bolstered by subsequent court decisions and formed the basis for the first state shield laws, formally extending qualified privilege to members of the working media. But the commonwealth is one of only nine states that do not have a shield law. In recent years, state Sen. Danica Roem, a former journalist, has introduced legislation to extend protections to media members in Virginia, only to see those efforts die in the General Assembly.

Setting aside those bills has not alleviated the need for them.

Virginia's lack of shield law came under scrutiny last year when former state Sen. Joe Morrisey sought to obtain text messages from Brandon Jarvis of The Virginia Scope following a series of stories Jarvis wrote about a custody battle between Morrisey and his wife. A District Court judge quashed Morrisey's subpoena but kept open a door that would require Jarvis to provide his communications to the court.

That's a familiar pattern: someone in elected office using the courts to suppress information or intimidate a journalist. It's enabled by the absence of protections for media members, and grows more pressing when the subject of reporting isn't one state

See FEDERAL on Page 9

A play about Gaza won awards in Israel. No theater would dare mount it now

By GUY BEN-AHARON
Los Angeles Times

Guy Ben-Aharon is an Israeli American theater director who divides his time between Boston and Jaffa, Israel. For nine years, he ran Israeli Stage based in Boston. He is also the founder and executive director of the Jar in Boston, an organization that uses the arts to create diverse communities.

In 2015, I directed the American premiere of an Israeli play that grapples with Gaza—a play I could never direct today.

Gilad Evron's *Ulysses on Bottles* centers on Izakov, a Jewish Israeli lawyer representing two clients: a Palestinian teacher, nicknamed Ulysses, arrested by Israel for trying to reach Gaza on a raft made of plastic bottles in hopes of bringing Russian literature to the strip, and an Israeli defense official, Seinfeld, seeking advice about whether Israel's blockade of Gaza could implicate the country in crimes against humanity.

The world premiere of the play in Israel in 2012 wasn't easy to produce. A Jewish actor declined the title role, fearing he'd be blacklisted from commercial work. Eventually the role went to a Palestinian citizen of Israel. Still, the production ran for more than 80 performances and won Israel's top theater prize for best original play that year.

When I directed *Ulysses* three years later in Boston, in a translation by Evan Fallenberg, I knew it would shake up audiences. I too was challenged by what the play brought up: Israelis' daily indifference to the Gaza siege, which their government hoped would weaken Hamas' rule but instead became a cruel policy of collective punishment.

My own discomfort is exactly why I wanted to do the play. Theater allows us to confront hard facts in a way that is provocative but ambiguous. It can make big issues intimate, and it doesn't force you to make up your mind, only to watch and wrestle.

Reaction to the Boston production could be summed up in one comment: great art but unsettling. Tickets sold out for the majority of the run, but my theater company, Israeli Stage, lost funders and audiences. The head of Boston's Jewish federation never came to another of our productions, and his organization reduced its sponsorship of our work. The consul general of Israel in Boston summoned me to his office and told me to put on other plays instead.

The morning of Hamas' attack on Oct. 7, feeling helpless and scared, I reread the play.

Here is an excerpt from the most difficult scene in the play, in which Seinfeld confesses his deepest fears to Izakov: that the population in Gaza will boom, diseases and misery will multiply and the blockade will explode in Israelis' faces:

Seinfeld: Imagine 10 million people who can't get out, who can barely move, who are infected and starved and scorched. … The fear no longer stops anyone. To live or to die—they don't see the difference. And they come and overtake us. And then what, lawyer Izakov? I shoot them at the border and I shoot them as they continue to advance and rise up; they grow in numbers and I keep shooting. … Thousands? Millions? How many? Till when?

The play seems prophetic today. Fear of death didn't stop Hamas from flooding into Israel and killing 1,200 people and taking more than 200 people hostage. Now as nearly 2 million Palestinians are displaced inside Gaza, fleeing Israeli bombardment, disease is rampant and famine looms.

And as Seinfeld predicts, we continue shooting. Gaza health officials say more than 24,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel's military, 10,000 of whom are children. Who knows how many more will be killed. Thousands? Millions? How many?"

As a director, I want to speak in the way I know best, to ask people to come to the theater and see what a play like "*Ulysses* on Bottles" has to say. But where could it be staged today?

I couldn't put it on in Germany. There, it would be attacked as antisemitic. A week into the Israel-Hamas war, Berlin's leading theater, the Maxim Gorki Theatre, postponed performances of "The Situation," a play by Israeli director-playwright Yael Ronen that explores the third generation of Germans, Israelis and Palestinians whose families survived the Holocaust and Nakba.

I couldn't put it on in the U.S. Theaters there would certainly fear the loss of support from Jewish audiences and benefactors. And for those who want to hear about Palestinian suffering, what an Israeli playwright has to say about Gaza would never do. In November, I asked a producer at a university theater company in Boston if he'd put on a reading of the play. He said the university president had forbidden productions or statements about Gaza on stage.

And Israel? No Israeli theater would dare put on this play now. I was texting with someone at the theater that originally produced it, and I asked whether they'd mount it now. The conversation ended; there was no response.

In fact, Gaza disappeared from the Israeli theater a long time ago. *Ulysses on Bottles* was the last major Israeli play to reckon with Gaza, and that was 12 years ago. Israeli theater, attended by a staggering 40% of the population, is harnessed by the state: Many actors come up through the military's performing troupes, and all theaters rely on public funding. When theaters criticize Israeli policy, or explore taboo topics such as the occupation or the Nakba, their funding may be cut or conditioned by the ministry of culture.

See PLAY on Page 9

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Joe Biden playing chicken over debates with Donald Trump

By JOE BATTENFELD
Boston Herald

President Joe Biden is already getting queasy about facing Donald Trump in debates, looking for a way out of one-on-one showdowns with his arch-nemesis.

Which is why the former president should force the issue as much as possible and demand the 81-year-old Biden face off in at least three 90-minute debates with unbiased moderators.

The TV networks want it, and the public deserves to see the two elderly likely nominees who both are facing questions about their mental sharpness go at it for three nights.

Only then will the public really be able to judge who is fit to be president.

It's a losing issue for the often stumbling Biden, who understandably is wary about debating anyone, let alone the bombastic and aggressive Trump.

Democrats are already cautioning Biden to avoid debating Trump, arguing that it will only legitimize the 77-year-old former president facing multiple indictments, including charges of inciting an insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021.

"I would think twice about it," Sen. Dick Durbin said. "I've been physically present at one of (Trump's) debates with Hillary Clinton, and I watched him do outrageous things and say outrageous things. It's just an opportunity for him to display his extremism."

And Biden's campaign has so far refused to commit to any debates, saying they would "look at the schedule" of debates planned by the Commission on Presidential Debates.

But deputy campaign manager Quentin Fulks told reporters last year that their "focus is on making sure we continue to build out a campaign and infrastructure that's going to be able to be competitive in 2024."

Biden's never going to commit and Trump would be wise to raise the debates every day on the stump to shame Biden into agreeing to face off.

Forget Nikki Haley – she's in the rearview mirror after her second place finish in New Hampshire.

Trump has refused to debate Haley, but it hasn't seemed to hurt him yet with voters. She will be rendered irrelevant if she can't win and is the least of Trump's problems.

Democrats will continue to try and muck up Trump legally and stop him from getting on the ballot. But it's possible the U.S. Supreme Court will make sure Democrats don't prevail.

Trump should do his best to focus squarely on Biden in the coming weeks, and ignore the legal traps.

Biden won't even answer questions from reporters, walking off the stage if he can find his way off the stage.

The allegedly non-partisan Commission on Presidential Debates has already scheduled three debates, the first on Sept. 16 at Texas State University. The vice presidential debate is scheduled on Sept. 25 at Lafayette College while the two other presidential showdowns are planned for Oct. 1 at Virginia State University and Oct. 9 at the University of Utah.

But of course either Trump or Biden can blow off those debates.

Trump has said he would participate in the commission debates, even though he thinks "they are totally corrupt and terrible."

"We have to debate," Trump said last year. "He and I have to definitely debate."

Is air travel in crisis? Hardly

By SHELDON H. JACOBSON
Chicago Tribune

Sheldon H. Jacobson is a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A data scientist, he applies his expertise in data-driven risk-based decision-making to evaluate and inform public policy.

Airplanes seem to be coming apart in midair. An Alaska Airlines flight was disrupted when the door plug on a section of its fuselage broke off after takeoff. The airplane model, Boeing 737 Max, has been under scrutiny since airplane crashes dating to 2018 and 2019.

Investigators determined the cause as a door plug that failed. Other investigations have found loose bolts on 737 Max planes that could be the cause of the door plug failure. Consequently, the Federal Aviation Administration grounded the nation's Boeing 737 9 Max fleet, citing safety concerns. United Airlines owns and operates 79 such airplanes out of more than 800 airplanes, a sizable percentage that has led to flight cancellations but not enough to shut down flight operations.

Safety is serious business in commercial air travel. The public places an enormous amount of trust in airlines, airplane manufacturers and the FAA to ensure that every flight they take will get them to their final destinations safely. With around 45,000 flights on average every day in the United States, such efforts have been rewarded with an unprecedented record of safety over the past decade.

Yet recent events suggest that perhaps such trust is misplaced and that it is only a matter of time before a major incident occurs that will derail such an impressive record.

> **"Though recent revelations may be disturbing, the fact that they are being uncovered and addressed is a good thing."**

I would argue that though recent revelations may be disturbing, the fact that they are being uncovered and addressed is a good thing.

All these stakeholders have a vested interest in air safety. As technology continues to grow, the ability to uncover mechanical and structural issues also grows.

This is much like how disease diagnosis and early detection in medicine have expanded. At one time, diagnosis of some conditions, such as certain cancers, came so late that treatment plans and patient survival statistics were bleak.

The lesson learned from recent events is that in any complex system, safety issues will always exist. The astonishing record of safe air travel has been acquired through many years of hard work and incremental improvements. While many have focused on the challenges with air traffic control staffing shortages and runway incursions, the physical infrastructure also deserves attention.

To date, Boeing and Airbus have been remarkably immune from design problems. They are now under a microscope. Much like how a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, the same can be said about the safety of air travel. Whether it is air traffic management, personnel availability and training, airport security, or airplane design, whatever problem is most current draws the most attention in the public eye.

Should air travelers be concerned? The partnership among the airlines, airplane manufacturers and the FAA provides multiple checks and balances to uncover issues that affect air travel.

Note that the recent issue on Alaska Air would have received little attention if the fuselage break had never occurred, and the loose bolts that allegedly caused the incident were uncovered during routine maintenance. Unfortunately, they were not. Moreover, it often takes some cataclysmic incident, such as an airplane crash, to uncover major problems. In this case, it is fortunate that although there were injuries, there were no fatalities.

The good news is that more attention is now being paid to airplane fuselages.

Once the dust settles, all stakeholders will temper the angst around the situation, and a semblance of normalcy will return to air travel. Note that in spite of the attention being paid to the Alaska Airlines incident, no fatalities occurred. Notably, when the flight crew asks you to keep your seat belt on during a flight, it may actually save your life.

The Alaska Airlines incident attests to the many checks and balances that exist to ensure that every air travel experience results in a safe journey for everyone. This is what every passenger deserves and what all stakeholders promise.

When some incident does occur, remember how safe air travel has been for many years and how continuous improvement is always needed to make it even safer.

FEDERAL

From page 8

senator's divorce but the abuse of power, corruption or illegality at the highest levels of government.

Though the House has passed versions on several occasions, the Senate has not, owing to concerns about reporting on national security issues. Some fear that shield laws could make disclosures, such as those by Edward Snowden or Reality Winner, more difficult to prosecute and encourage further revelations that run counter to the nation's interests.

But here, again, is a chance to see this important work done. The House passed the PRESS Act on Jan. 20 and it includes robust protection for media but also exemptions in cases sensitive information could thwart terrorism or prevent violence.

The Senate companion bill, sponsored by odd bipartisan bedfellows Ron Wyden, D-Oregon; Mike Lee, R-Utah; and Richard Durbin, D-Illinois, is expected to be considered soon.

While the Virginia General Assembly punted on its chance to extend protections to journalists, Congress took up the ball and is running with it. Virginians should encourage Warner and Kaine to support this bill and help ensure that a free press thrives in the commonwealth and across the nation.

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PLAY

From page 8

During the last two decades of Israel's rightward drift, theater professionals have self-censored to survive, a situation made worse now. I know an actress who was suspended from teaching at an acting studio because she posted about Palestinian suffering that predated Oct. 7. In November, Jerusalem's municipal theater dropped a play by an Afghan-British playwright about his family's exile from Afghanistan because he tweeted about the "Gaza genocide." "We cannot celebrate the work of this writer," the theater's manager said in a news release.

There's a scene in *Ulysses on Bottles* where Izakov tries to convince Ulysses to sign an agreement that he won't set sail for Gaza ever again, in exchange for his freedom from jail:

Izakov: Sign the agreement and that's that! … Enough throwing your life away on something so insubstantial, so completely groundless. …Stop being some parody, some extinct species that nobody is interested in or knows anything about. Your anonymity is complete. The theater is empty. There are no protest movements, there's no echo, the square is empty. Go home!

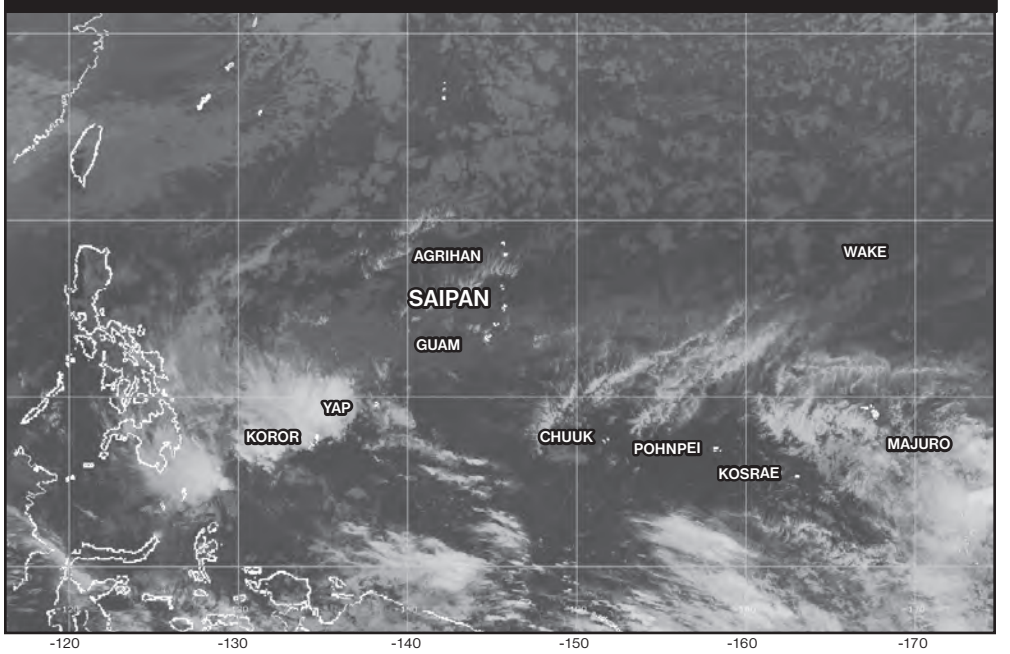
The squares in Israel do feel empty. Antiwar protests are made up of a hundred protesters at best. The theaters are full but with plays that serve as distractions from war. There's no place where an Israeli director can put Gaza center stage and ask audiences to come to terms with their inaction in the face of an endless cycle of violence. As things stand, Ulysses can't even dream of setting sail.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly sunny with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 75°	87 75°	87 75°	87 75°	87 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:48 AM SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A couple of fragmented shear lines are lingering over the Marianas this morning. Satellite indicates patchy clouds and spotty showers over the region. Surface winds are light to moderate from NNE this morning. Saipan buoy shows combined seas of 8 to 10 feet mainly from north-northwest and Ipan buoy shows seas of 6 feet from NE and E.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°
Palau	Cloudy	84° / 78°
Yap	Cloudy	84° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°
Pohnpei	Sunny	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Sunny	86° / 79°
Majuro	Sunny	84° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:13 PM
Tuesday	6:46 AM	6:13 PM
Wednesday	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Thursday	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:15 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:00 AM	9:03 PM
Tuesday	-	9:33 AM	9:48 PM
Wednesday	-	10:05 AM	10:34 PM
Thursday	-	10:38 AM	11:21 PM
Friday	-	11:13 AM	5:18 AM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Showers	77° / 64°
Beijing	Fair	39° / 18°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	62° / 51°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	80° / 70°
London	Showers	43° / 36°
Los Angeles	Cloudy	69° / 54°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	70° / 54°
Miami	Showers	76° / 66°
New York	Cloudy	47° / 42°
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	51° / 38°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	52° / 43°
Busan	Sunny	48° / 33°
Rome	Showers	61° / 48°
Salem	Rain	56° / 41°
San Francisco	Showers	43° / 28°
Seoul	Sunny	39° / 18°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	53° / 39°
Washington, DC	Rain	61° / 46°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:49 AM	Low Tide	-0.17
10:37 AM	High Tide	1.60
4:25 PM	Low Tide	0.84
9:19 PM	High Tide	1.51

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

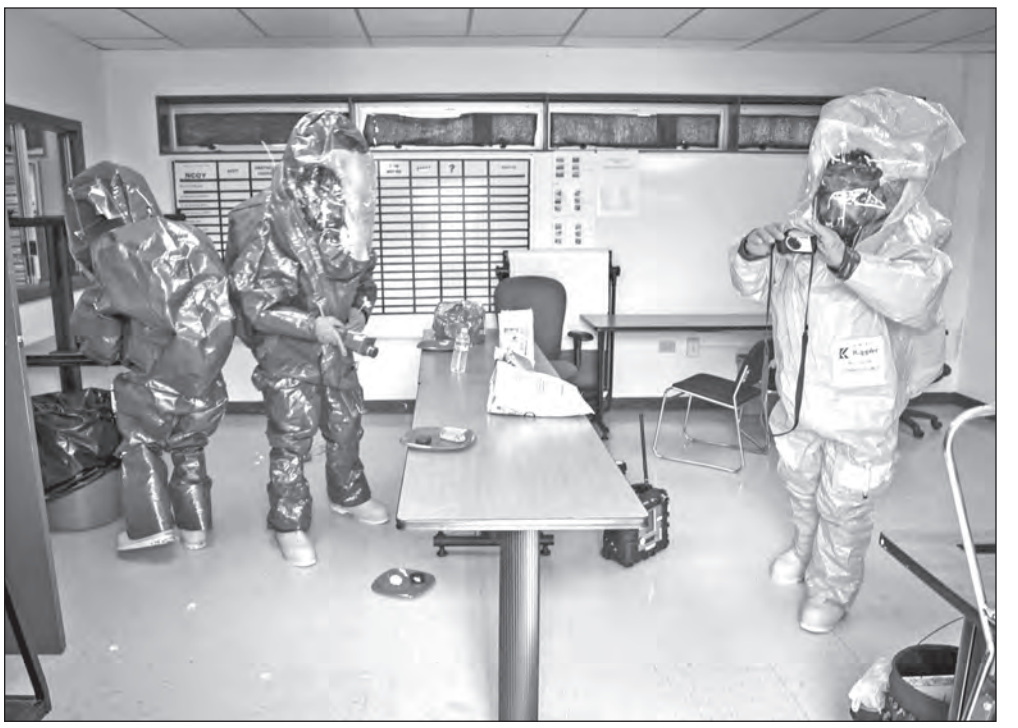
TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Guam Guard Civil Support Team solves Murder

GUAM NATIONAL GUARD

Survey Team members of the Guam National Guard's 94th Civil Support Team approach a "contaminated building" during a training exercise at Fort Juan Muna, Jan. 17, 2024. The CST stands by 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents under the direction of the adjutant general and governor.



GUAM NATIONAL GUARD

Members of the Guam National Guard's 94th Civil Support Team survey a "contaminated building" during a training exercise at Fort Juan Muna, Jan. 17, 2024. The CST stands by 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents under the direction of the adjutant general and governor.

DEDEDO, Guam—Popcorn, ho-hos, and mini-donuts litter the floor during an exercise at the Guam National Guard's Fort Juan Muna. Such a mess is not common for a military base, but this is not a common day.

The 94th Civil Support Team was responding to a training scenario in which an entire conference of distinguished visitors collapsed while having catered breakfast. According to "reports," attendees in one section of the room presented with severe nausea, difficulty breathing, seizures, and eventual loss of consciousness. Shortly after, everyone in the room was similarly affected. There were no "survivors" in this simulation.

Capt. Jethro Lanuza is the Nuclear Medical Science Officer for the CST. "People were getting sick, so they called us in to check it out. Right now we have three personnel downrange doing Site Characterization to give us a picture of what's going on," said Lanuza. "From there, we can come up with a plan."

CSTs are National Guard units designed to provide specialized capability to respond to a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incident. The CST stands by 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to deploy under the direction of the adjutant general and governor.

Outside the conference room, the fully-suited survey team takes instrument readings sends frequent radio reports back to command. With limited visibility from the suits, they call out obstacles and stay in constant communication. After a few more readings and with clearance, the team makes entry.

Scattered food and fallen chairs show signs of physical struggle. "The plates are all half-eaten, but they don't all have a common denominator," said one of the team members. "The only thing they have in common is the plate itself."

However, photos from the survey team reveal some settings did not have a plate. It is not known if the caterers or janitorial staff were properly supervised during preparations, but both left before the conference began. Aside from the disarray, photos reveal no unusual objects on the floors or ceilings.

Finally approaching the area where the first victims became ill, the team notices increased readings on their instruments. While the readings are not off the wall, they are enough for the team to understand the essence of the problem. Trusting their equipment, their training, and each other, the team zeroes in on the source of the contamination and immediately reports back to command.

"They found it," said Lanuza.

"Being a part of the CST is an awesome responsibility," said Lanuza. "As first responders, we get to work with the Guam Fire Department and Guam Police Department, the FBI, and so on, mitigating dangers for our community. I'm the first-generation U.S. Citizen and I grew up here. So being on a team that allows me to give back to this community and this nation has been a blessing."

To guess the source of contamination and learn the answer, message the Guam National Guard on Facebook or Instagram. ***(PR)***

GUAM NATIONAL GUARD

Members of the Guam National Guard's 94th Civil Support Team encourage each other during a training exercise at Fort Juan Muna, Jan. 17, 2024. The CST stands by 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond to a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents under the direction of the adjutant general and governor.

UOG gallery to display 55 creative works by GDOE students through Art-a-Thon

MANGILAO, Guam—The Isla Center for the Arts at the University of Guam announces the 25th Annual Art-a-Thon Exhibition with the theme "Preserving Our Home: Sustainability in Art."

The opening reception for the exhibit will be from 5:30pm to 7pm on Thursday, Feb. 8, at House No. 15, Dean's Circle, on campus at UOG. The exhibit will continue through Feb. 23, 2024.

The exhibit is open to the public and free of charge.

The exhibit will showcase 55 works selected from the artwork of 314 students from 17 Guam Department of Education Schools who participated in this school year's Art-a-Thon.

Students from elementary, middle, and high schools produced these impressive works using a variety of media including crayons, pastels, colored pencils, ink, collage, mixed media, pastels, markers, watercolor, ink, acrylics, and cardboard, said Dr. Velma Jean Yamashita, associate professor of art, and coordinator at Isla Center for the Arts.

This year's Art-a-Thon is unique in several ways. Due to the island's continuing recovery from Typhoon Mawar, the pledging component of the Art-a-Thon was not included this year. This year's focus is solely on the production of artwork and the promotion of artistic expression. This year's theme is "Preserving Our Home: Sustainability in Art."

UOG

This poster showcases the artwork "Fauna of Guahan" submitted by Temari Banu, from Okkodo High School, who won first place in the high school category, 25th Isla Art-A-Thon.

UOG

The Isla Center for the Arts worked with Guam Green Growth Circular Economy Makerspace & Innovation Hub, located in Chamorro Village in Hagåtña, for G3 to create unique frames using pallet wood for the featured works of art.

The Isla Center for the Arts worked with Guam Green Growth Circular Economy Makerspace & Innovation Hub, located in Chamorro Village in Hagåtña, to create unique frames using pallet wood and exhibition posters for the featured works of art.

This project is sponsored by the UOG College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

Gallery hours are Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm; and Saturdays 10am-2pm.

For more information, call (671) 735-2965 or email islacenter@triton.uog.edu. ***(UOG)***

Business

Gold's Gym Saipan launches '2024 Gold's Gym Challenge'

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Gold's Gym Challenge is open to individuals aged 18 or older residing in the CNMI and maintaining Gold's Gym membership throughout the Challenge

Gold's Gym Saipan proudly announces the launch of the "2024 Gold's Gym Challenge," inviting fitness enthusiasts to register for this transformative 12-week competition.

With a focus on promoting health and fitness, the challenge offers participants the chance to exceed their fitness goals, undergo a personal transformation, and vie for a share of the cash prize pool.

Overall male and female winners will each receive $500 in cash along with a one-year gift certificate to Gold's Gym Saipan. Furthermore, up to 36 winners across various age categories will be awarded valuable prizes.

Tyce Mister, Gold's Gym Saipan general manager, expressed enthusiasm, saying, "I love this type of competition where we all win! Challengers inspire and support each other, knowing the real prize is a healthier and stronger self."

Challengers can kick off their journey in one of the following flights:

■ Flight A: Feb. 5 or 6-Apr. 29 or 30

■ Flight B: Feb. 16 or 17-May 10 or 11

■ Flight C: Feb. 26 or 27-May 20 or 21

Contestants will be measured and photographed at the program's commencement to establish a baseline for their 12-week transformation. At the challenge's conclusion, a final assessment will document the results and determine the winners in each category.

The Gold's Gym Challenge is open to individuals aged 18 or older residing in the CNMI and maintaining Gold's Gym membership throughout the Challenge. The entry fee is $60, and registration is open at Gold's Gym Saipan, located next to Sugar King Park. Participants can also explore exclusive 2024 Challenge Specials upon registration. The total cash prize pool is contingent on the number of participants.

Since its inception in 2013, the Gold's Gym Challenge has been a positive force promoting health and fitness in the community. Gold's Gym Saipan expresses gratitude to partners for their steadfast support: Michelob Ultra, PHI Pharmacy, Brabu Pharmacy & Wellness Center, and TurnKey Solutions.

For questions or additional information, contact Gold's Gym Saipan at (670) 233-4000. ***(PR)***

A COVID-era program is awash in fraud

WASHINGTON (AP)—When IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel met privately with senators recently, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee asked for his assessment of a startling report: A whistleblower estimated that 95% of claims now being made by businesses for a COVID-era tax break were fraudulent.

"He looked at his shoes and he basically said, 'Yeah,'" recalled the lawmaker who posed that question, Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

The answer explains why Congress is racing to wind down what is known as the employee retention tax credit. Congress established the program during the coronavirus pandemic as an incentive for businesses to keep workers on the payroll.

Demand for the credit soared as Congress extended the tax break and made it available to more companies. Aggressive marketers dangled the prospect of enormous refunds to business owners if they would just apply. As a result, what was expected to cost the federal government $55 billion has instead ballooned to nearly five times that amount as of July. Meanwhile, new claims are still pouring into the IRS each week, ensuring a growing price tag that lawmakers are anxious to cap.

Lawmakers across the political spectrum who rarely agree on little else—from liberal Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., to conservative Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis.—agree it's time to close down the program.

"I don't have the exact number, but it's like almost universal fraud in the program. It should be ended," Johnson said. "I don't see how anybody could support it."

Warren added: "The standards were too loose and the oversight was too thin."

The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that winding down the program more quickly and increasing penalties for those companies promoting improper claims would generate about $79 billion over 10 years.

Lawmakers aim to use the savings to offset the cost of three business tax breaks and a more generous child tax credit for many low-income families. Households benefiting from the changes in the child tax credit would see an average tax cut of $680 in the first year, according to an estimate from the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center.

Nation

Trump praises Texas governor

» As border state clashes with Biden administration over immigration

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Former President Donald Trump lavished praise Saturday on Texas Gov. Greg Abbott for not allowing the Biden administration entry to remove razor wire in a popular corridor for migrants illegally entering the U.S. in an escalating feud over immigration.

In a speech focused overwhelmingly on border security, Trump said Texas should be given full support in its measures to deter migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border. The state is restricting the U.S. Border Patrol after the Supreme Court cleared the way for these federal agents to cut or remove the sharp metal barrier.

"When I'm president, instead of trying to send Texas a restraining order, I will send them reinforcements," Trump told a crowd of supporters in Las Vegas, where he rallied on an indoor soccer field in a largely Latino neighborhood. "Instead of fighting border states, I will use every resource tool and authority of the U.S. president to defend the United States of America from this horrible invasion that is taking place right now."

Trump largely avoided talking about a verdict delivered by a jury in a defamation case Friday, ordering him to pay an additional $83.3 million to columnist E. Jean Carroll, who he called a liar for accusing him of sexual assault.

The former president, who is getting closer to securing the Republican presidential nomination, said he was the victim of the Biden administration weaponizing law enforcement against him as he faces 91 criminal charges in four indictments accusing him of trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election, mishandling classified documents and arranging payoffs to a porn star.

"What they're doing with elections and election interference as an example of what they do with me," he said. "Look at yesterday, look at all this crap that's going on, but we keep marching forward, we just keep going and somehow it all works out."

Annabelle Weislocher, 51, a nurse who retired from the Navy and the Air Force Reserve, said she felt the cases against Trump are attempts to weaken him and drain him from his resources.

"They know he's leading. They know he's strong. And they're doing everything just to lower him," she said. "That's what they're trying to do, take his money thinking he won't have enough funds to campaign. That's the goal."

Trump's support among Hispanics has grown since he first ran in 2016. And on Saturday, he drove that point, drawing loud cheers when he claimed he was doing very well in that voter demographic.

The Republican candidate said Hispanic and Black families hurt the most from the arrival of migrants into the country and said President Joe Biden should not have ended restrictions implemented during the Trump administration to deter migration.

"I'll get it solved and I'll get it solved and start the process on day one—on day one, we will start that process," he said. "That's why we're going to win the record share of Latino votes."

The historic number of migrants arriving at the U.S. border with Mexico during Biden's term is one of the main challenges of his re-election campaign.

Immigration was a top issue during Iowa's Republican caucuses earlier this month, when Trump won. An AP VoteCast survey found about 9 in 10 caucusgoers backed building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, with about 7 in 10 expressing strong support for the idea.

Biden offers fresh assurances he would shut down border 'right now' if Congress sends him a deal

COLUMBIA, South Carolina (AP)—Bidding to salvage a border deal in Congress that also would unlock money for Ukraine, President Joe Biden offered fresh assurances Saturday night that he would be willing to close the U.S.-Mexico border if lawmakers would only send him a bill to sign.

Biden—also eager to disarm GOP criticism of his handling of migration at the border—said at a political event in South Carolina that he would shut down the border '"right now" if Congress passed the proposed deal. The framework hasn't been formally agreed to by Senate Democrats and Republicans and would face an uncertain future in the GOP-controlled House.

"A bipartisan bill would be good for America and help fix our broken immigration system and allow speedy access for those who deserve to be here, and Congress needs to get it done," Biden said. "It'll also give me as president, the emergency authority to shut down the border until it could get back under control. If that bill were the law today, I'd shut down the border right now and fix it quickly."

The deal being negotiated in Congress would require the U.S. to shutter the border if roughly 5,000 migrants cross illegally on any given day. Some one-day totals last year exceeded 10,000.

Former President Donald Trump has been pressuring Republicans for weeks to kill the negotiations. He's loathe to give a win to Biden on an issue that animated the Republican's successful 2016 campaign and that he wants to use as he seeks to return to the White House. Negotiators had appeared to be closing in on a deal, but it started to fray after Trump's admonitions to conservative lawmakers grew stronger.

In a written statement on Friday evening, Biden said the deal would allow him "a new emergency authority" to close the border. He added: "And if given that authority, I would use it the day I sign the bill into law."

It was a stark claim from a Democratic president that was met with astonishment and shock from immigrant advocates who have said his policies do not reflect the progressive approach they had expected.

"Voters want to see our elected leaders do the hard work to fix our frayed immigration system," said Deirdre Schifeling, chief political and advocacy officer at the American Civil Liberties Union. "President Biden and Congress must abandon these proposals and heed voters' demands for fair and effective immigration policies that manage the border and treat people seeking safety with dignity."

Asia

How Taiwan beat back disinformation and preserved integrity of its election

WASHINGTON (AP)—The rumors about vote fraud started swirling as the ballots in Taiwan's closely watched presidential election were tallied on Jan. 13. There were baseless claims that people had fabricated votes and that officials had miscounted and skewed the results.

In a widely shared video, a woman recording votes mistakenly enters one in the column for the wrong candidate. The message was clear: The election could not be trusted. The results were faked.

It could have been Taiwan's Jan. 6 moment. But it wasn't.

Worries that China would use disinformation to undermine the integrity of Taiwan's vote dogged the recent election, a key moment in the young democracy's development that highlighted tensions with its much larger neighbor.

In repelling disinformation, Chinese and domestic, Taiwan offers an example to other democracies holding elections this year.

This year , more than 50 countries that are home to half the planet's population are due to hold national elections. From India to Mexico, the U.K. to Russia, the outcomes of the elections will test the strengths of democracies and countries with authoritarian leaders.

In Taiwan, the response to disinformation was swift. Fact-checking groups debunked the rumors, while the Central Election Commission held a news conference to push back on claims of electoral discrepancies. Influencers like @FroggyChiu with more than 600,000 subscribers also put out explainers on YouTube explaining how votes are tallied.

The video showing the election worker miscounting votes had been selectively edited, fact-checkers found. Voters at the voting station spotted the woman's error and election workers quickly corrected the count, according to MyGoPen, an independent Taiwanese fact-checking chatbot.

It was just one of dozens of videos that fact checkers had to debunk.

"I believe some people genuinely believed this. And when the election results came out, they thought something was up," said Eve Chiu, the editor-in-chief of Taiwan's FactCheck Center, a nonprofit journalism organization.

Lai Ching-te of the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party won the election on Jan. 13 against Ko Wen-je of the Taiwan People's Party and Hou Yu-ih of the Nationalist Party (Kuomingtang), in an election that was seen as a referendum on the island's relationship with China.

Supporters of the Taiwan People's Party presidential candidate, many of whom are young, had shared the videos widely on TikTok, which were then shared on Facebook. Prior to the election results, many thought there was a chance of a Ko upset in the race given the candidate had drawn a lot of online attention. Taiwan's FactCheck Center debunked multiple videos of alleged voter fraud, including another one in which voting officials make a human error caught on camera. The source of these videos is unclear.

Notably, Taiwan has resisted calls for tougher laws that would require social media platforms to police their sites; a proposal to institute such rules was withdrawn in 2022 after free speech concerns were raised.

China, which claims Taiwan as its own, targeted the island with a stream of disinformation ahead of its election, according to research from DoubleThink Lab.

Much of it sought to undermine faith in the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party and cast it as belligerent and likely to start a war that Taiwan can't win. Other narratives targeted U.S. support for Taiwan, arguing that America was an untrustworthy partner only interested in Taiwan's semiconductor exports that wouldn't support the island if it came to war with China.

Messages left with the Chinese embassy in Washington were not immediately returned Saturday.

Tensions simmering in S. China Sea and violence in Myanmar as Laos takes over ASEAN chair

BANGKOK (AP)—Simmering tensions in the South China Sea between China and several Southeast Asian nations now regularly spark direct confrontation. Fighting in Myanmar against the military government that seized power three years ago has grown to the point that most say the country is now in a civil war.

Hopes were high that Indonesia might be able to make significant inroads on both issues during its 2023 chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, using its clout as the bloc's largest country, but little progress was made. Now Laos, the bloc's poorest and one of its smallest countries, has taken over the rotating chair.

As foreign ministers gather in Luang Prabang for this year's first top-level meetings over the weekend, many are pessimistic that ASEAN can keep its biggest challenges from festering and growing.

"There were so many expectations when Indonesia started its presidency and some of those expectations fell short," said Shafiah Muhibat, an expert with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Indonesia.

"So with Indonesia moving on to Laos, I think the expectations are quite low in terms of what Laos can actually do."

After the military seized control of Myanmar in February 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, ASEAN—comprised of Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei and Laos—came up with a "Five-Point Consensus" plan for peace.

The military leadership in Myanmar has so far ignored the plan. At the same time, a humanitarian crisis is growing, with more than 2.6 million people forced from their homes due to escalating violence, according to the United Nations.

Indonesia, despite touting more than 180 "engagements" with stakeholders in Myanmar, was unable to achieve a breakthrough.

ASEAN's plan calls for the immediate cessation of violence, a dialogue among all concerned parties, mediation by an ASEAN special envoy, provision of humanitarian aid through ASEAN channels, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy to meet all concerned parties.

"ASEAN actually has very little leverage on Myanmar; Myanmar doesn't care about ASEAN at all," said Muhammad Faizal, with the Institute of Defense and Strategic studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "They don't give a hoot about the five-point consensus."

World

Top UN court orders Israel to prevent genocide in Gaza

AP

Pro-Palestinian activists react near the International Court of Justice, or World Court, in The Hague, Netherlands, Friday, Jan. 26, 2024.

» But stops short of ordering cease-fire

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP)—The United Nations' top court on Friday ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive that has laid waste to the Palestinian enclave.

In a ruling that will keep Israel under the legal lens for years to come, the court offered little other comfort to Israeli leaders in a genocide case brought by South Africa that goes to the core of one of the world's most intractable conflicts. The court's half-dozen orders will be difficult to achieve without some sort of cease-fire or pause in the fighting.

"The court is acutely aware of the extent of the human tragedy that is unfolding in the region and is deeply concerned about the continuing loss of life and human suffering," court President Joan E. Donoghue said.

The ruling amounted to an overwhelming rebuke of Israel's wartime conduct and added to mounting international pressure to halt the nearly 4-month-old offensive that has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, decimated vast swaths of Gaza and driven nearly 85% of its 2.3 million people from their homes.

Allowing the accusations to stand stung the government of Israel, which was founded as a Jewish state after the Nazi slaughter of 6 million Jews during World War II.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the fact that the court was willing to discuss the genocide charges was a "mark of shame that will not be erased for generations." He vowed to press ahead with the war.

The power of the ruling was magnified by its timing, coming on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Later Friday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed that the top court's rulings are legally binding and "trusts" that Israel will comply with its orders, including "to take all measures within its power" to prevent acts that would bring about the destruction of the Palestinian people.

"Those truly needing to stand trial are those that murdered and kidnapped children, women and the elderly," former Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said, referring to Hamas militants who stormed through Israeli communities on Oct. 7 in the attack that set off the war. The assault killed some 1,200 people and resulted in another 250 being kidnapped.

The court also called on Hamas to release the hostages who are still in captivity. Hamas urged the international community to make Israel carry out the court's orders.

Yemen Houthi rebels fire missile at US warship, escalating worst Mideast sea conflict in decades

JERUSALEM (AP)—Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a missile Friday at a United States warship patrolling the Gulf of Aden, forcing it to shoot down the projectile, and struck a British vessel as their aggressive attacks on maritime traffic continue.

The attack on the U.S. warship, the destroyer USS Carney, marked a further escalation in the biggest confrontation at sea the U.S. Navy has seen in the Middle East in decades, as Houthi missile fire set another commercial vessel ablaze Friday night.

Early Saturday local time, U.S. forces conducted a strike against a Houthi anti-ship missile that was aimed into the Red Sea and prepared to launch, the U.S. military's Central Command said.

The Houthis' Al-Masirah satellite news channel said the strikes happened near the port city of Hodeida, but offered no assessment of their damage.

The Carney attack represents the first time the Houthis directly targeted a U.S. warship since the rebels began their assaults on shipping in October, a U.S. official said on condition of anonymity because no authorization had been given to discuss the incident.

Later Friday, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Operations, which oversees Mideast waterways, acknowledged a vessel had been struck by a missile and was on fire in the Gulf of Aden.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree did not acknowledge the Carney attack, but claimed the missile attack on the commercial vessel that set it ablaze. He identified the vessel as the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Marlin Luanda.

Health & Wellness

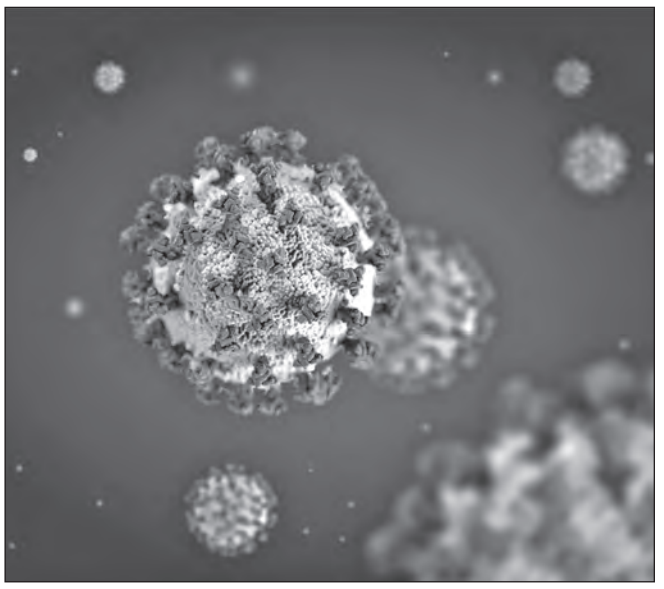
EDITOR'S NOTE:
These articles were originally intended for publication as part of a health supplement in celebration of National Immunization Awareness Month last August.

Protecting our communities: The power of immunization

BY YOUR HEALTH
By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

Immunization, vaccination, or inoculation are interchangeably used to define the process of being protected from life-threatening diseases through vaccines. It is, therefore, a source of much perplexity in the medical world that the subject still provokes debates.

To be or not to be vaccinated? In the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, the subject of immunization had become a much more polarizing topic of discussion that "pro and anti-vaxxers" were seen holding demonstrations in many of the world's major cities.



FREEPIK

The coronavirus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic.

The debate about the effectiveness of vaccinations to curb infectious diseases most likely began in 1796 when the British physician Edward Jenner invented the vaccine for smallpox. In the 1800s, many of the elite, educated physicians saw the potential of the vaccine not just to gain economic advancement, but most importantly, to improve health care.

Leading medical experts, in fact, often consider immunization one of the greatest achievements in public health. They describe this as a powerful tool that not only shields individuals from preventable diseases but also extends its protective embrace to families and entire communities.

Yet data from the World Health Organization shows that despite immunization being one of the most successful public health interventions, immunization coverage did not grow in the decades prior to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic disrupted and strained global health systems, resulting in dramatic setbacks in global immunization efforts.

Thanks to aggressive efforts to ensure successful; immunization programs, WHO figures in 2022 show that the number of children missing out on any vaccination, also called zero-dose children, improved from 18.1 million in 2021 to 14.3 million in 2022. This is nearly back to pre-pandemic 2019 level, with 12.9 million in vaccinated children on a global scale.

The bottom line is that vaccinations not only protect one individual; they ensure and protect the future of humanity from extinction by preventing the spread of deadly diseases.

At the individual level, vaccines are the armor that fortifies our immune system against a range of dangerous diseases. Vaccines fend off illnesses that in the past have claimed countless lives and caused untold suffering. Vaccination provides a personalized shield, ensuring that each person's body is prepared to confront potential threats.

At its core, immunization is a collective effort that fosters the concept of herd immunity, creating a safeguard against the spread of infectious diseases.

Parents' guide to vaccines schedules: Keeping children safe

BY YOUR HEALTH
By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

Just before children reach 2 years old, they could already be potentially exposed to up to 14 serious diseases. That's 14 diseases that could be fatal or have devastating effects that will affect them throughout life.

That's where vaccines come into play and the protective shield they provide literally last from cradle to grave. It is important for parents to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommended immunization schedule to protect infants from 14 such diseases before their second birthday.

FREEPIK

It is important for parents to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommended immunization schedule to protect infants from 14 potentially life-threatening diseases before their second birthday.

The CDC sets the recommended immunization schedule as part of its efforts to promote and protect the health of everyone—from the time they are born until adulthood—against vaccine preventable diseases. Not only is CDC's recommended immunization schedule safe, but it has proven to be effective in protecting infants and children from highly contagious diseases.

The schedule for childhood immunization has also received approval from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Approving the schedule for adult vaccination are the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, and the American College of Nurse-Midwives.

It is often asked if an infant needs to get vaccinated right after birth and the answer is a resounding yes. Medical experts who have developed the immunization schedule have closely considered the timing to obtain vaccines to prevent compromising the health of newborns from life-threatening illnesses.

Parents are discouraged from delaying their children vaccinations since this will make them more vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases that can sometimes lead to health complications.

Vaccination is considered as one of the best babyproofing plans and the earlier infants gets one, the better they will be able to fight off diseases that they may get from either exposure to anyone with a weakened immune system or during a disease outbreak.

Health care providers both at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Immunization Clinic and private medical clinics in the CNMI can help parents get anyone eligible to get vaccinated. They can also help parents catch up with their children's immunization schedule should there be a delay in getting one.

To see the schedule, visit the following links:

- https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/child-easyread.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/adolescent-easyread.html

Information and resources about vaccines are also available online from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents; the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.healthychidlren.org; Immunize.org at www.vaccineinformation.org and at Vaccinate Your Family at www.vaccinateyourfamily.org

VACCINATION CLINICS AND RESOURCES

Where to get vaccinated

BY YOUR HEALTH
By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

CNMI children and adults who are eligible to get vaccinated may do so through the various clinics and health centers operated by the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. and its partner clinics all over the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

The CHCC's immunization program aims to curb the introduction and prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases in the CNMI. Its goals include increasing and maintaining high immunization coverage, expanding access to vaccines, and enforcing public health immunization laws.

The CHCC's immunization program provides routine vaccinations to eligible individuals who have Medicaid and those who may or may not have health insurance coverage.

Vaccines are free for those with ages between 0-18 years old through the Vaccines for Children program, while the Section 317 program allows those 19 years old and above free access to vaccines. Those who are uninsured but would like to get vaccinated may contact CHCC's Immunization Clinic.

Vaccine services are available at the following locations:

- **CHCC Immunization Clinic** at the main campus, lower level of the hospital in Garapan on Saipan. It is open from Monday to Friday with office hours from 7:30am to 4:30pm. For inquiries, call (670) 234-8745/08/80/81/83
- **CHCC Outpatient Clinics** (Children's Clinic, Family Care Clinic, and Women's Clinic)
- **Tinian Health Center** in San Jose, Tinian. Contact them at (670) 433-9233
- **Rota Health Center** in Songsong, Rota. Contact them at (670) 532=9461
- **CHCC Mobile Clinic and Outreach Events**

Vaccines are also available through CHCC's Vaccines for Children/COVID-19 Partner Clinics in the CNMI:

- **Medical Associates of the Pacific** located at the Mariana Heights Business Park on Saipan. The clinic is open from Monday to Friday, from 8am to 5pm. For inquiries, call (670) 323-9000.
- **Marianas Medical Center** located at the JKR Building in Garapan, Saipan. Clinic hours are from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and from 8am to 12pm on Saturdays. Contact them at (670) 234-3926.
- **Kagman Isla Community Health** is at 6690 Kagman Road in Kagman, Saipan. The clinic is open Mondays to Fridays and is closed during the weekends and every third Wednesday of the month.
- **Southern Isla Community Health** is located at 856 Chalan Tun Tomas P. Sablan in San Antonio, Saipan. The clinic is open Mondays to Fridays and is closed during the weekends and every third Wednesday of the month.
- **Tinian Isla Community Health**. The clinic is located at 5 Canal Street in San Jose, Tinian. It is open Mondays to Fridays and is closed during the weekends and every third Wednesday of the month.

Life & Style

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE JAPANESE?

Ukrainian-born Miss Japan rekindles an old question

TOKYO (AP)—Crowned Miss Japan this week, Ukrainian-born Carolina Shiino cried with joy, thankful for the recognition of her identity as Japanese. But her Caucasian look rekindled an old question in a country where many people value homogeneity and conformity: What does it mean to be Japanese?

Shiino has lived in Japan since moving here at age 5 and became a naturalized citizen in 2022. Now 26, she works as a model and says she has as strong a sense of Japanese identity as anyone else, despite her non-Japanese look.

"It really is like a dream," Shiino said in fluent Japanese in her tearful acceptance speech Monday. "I've faced a racial barrier. Even though I'm Japanese, there have been times when I was not accepted. I'm full of gratitude today that I have been accepted as Japanese."

AP

Contestants including Carolina Shiino, who won the Miss Nippon (Japan) Grand Prix, center, pose for a photo after the contest in Tokyo, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024.

"I hope to contribute to building a society that respects diversity and is not judgmental about how people look," Shiino said.

But her crowning triggered a debate over whether she should represent Japan.

Some people said on social media that it was wrong to pick a Miss Japan who doesn't have even a drop of Japanese blood even if she grew up in Japan. Others said there was no problem with Shiino's crowning because her Japanese citizenship makes her Japanese.

Japan has a growing number of people with multiracial and multicultural backgrounds, as more people marry foreigners and the country accepts foreign workers to make up for its rapidly aging and declining population.

But tolerance of diversity has lagged.

Chiaki Horan, a biracial television personality, said on a news program Thursday that she was born in Japan and has Japanese nationality, yet has often faced questions of whether she is really Japanese or why she is commenting on Japan.

"I've learned that there are some people who require purity of blood as part of Japaneseness," she said. "I wonder if there is a lack of an understanding that there may be people of diverse roots from different places if you just go back a few generations."

Shiino is only the latest to face the repercussions of questions over what constitutes Japanese.

Ariana Miyamoto, a native of Nagasaki who has a Japanese mother and an African American father, also faced fierce criticism when she was chosen to represent Japan in the Miss Universe pageant in 2015.

When tennis star Naomi Osaka lit the Olympic cauldron at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Games in 2021, she was lashed by nationalists on social media for not being "pure Japanese," though she was also warmly welcomed by many.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

'Saltburn' actor Barry Keoghan named Hasty Pudding's Man of the Year

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP)—Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals has named Barry Keoghan, best known for his roles in "Dunkirk," "The Killing of a Sacred Deer," "Eternals," and "The Banshees of Inisherin," as the recipient of its 2024 Man of the Year Award. Keoghan recently starred in the comedy psychological thriller "Saltburn" and can be seen co-starring in the series "Masters of The Air," a World War II drama focused on bomber crews.

The Man of the Year festivities will take place Feb. 2. Hasty Pudding Theatricals will host a roast for Keoghan and present him with his pudding pot. Afterwards, Keoghan will attend a performance of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 175th production "Heist Heist Baby!"

Wrestling icon Vince McMahon resigns from WWE after ex-employee files sex abuse suit

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP)—Wrestling icon Vince McMahon resigned Friday from WWE's parent company t he day after a former employee filed a federal lawsuit accusing him and another former executive of serious sexual misconduct, including offering her to a star wrestler for sex. McMahon stepped down from the his position as executive chairman of the board of directors at WWE's parent company, TKO Group Holdings, according to a statement released late Friday. He continued to deny wrongdoing following the lawsuit filed by Janel Grant, who worked in the company's legal and talent departments. The suit includes allegations that McMahon, now 78, forced Grant into a sexual relationship in order for her to get and keep a job and passed around pornographic pictures and videos of her to other men, including other WWE employees.

King Charles III is doing well after scheduled prostate treatment

LONDON (AP)—King Charles III is doing well after undergoing a "corrective procedure" for an enlarged prostate, Queen Camilla said Friday as she left the private hospital where he was being treated. The 75-year-old monarch was admitted to the London Clinic, where the Princess of Wales, his daughter-in-law, is recovering from abdominal surgery, Buckingham Palace said Friday. The king, who entered the hospital with Camilla at his side, visited Kate at the clinic after he arrived. "He's doing well, thank you," Camilla told people inside the hospital. She left the hospital at 3:10 p.m. and appeared to be in good spirits. Charles, who ascended the throne 16 months ago, was diagnosed with the benign condition on Jan. 17 after he experienced undisclosed symptoms. He canceled engagements and was urged to rest ahead of the procedure. which had concluded by Friday afternoon.'

'In the Summers' and 'Porcelain War' win top prizes at Sundance Film Festival

"In the Summers," an affecting, years-spanning drama about a complicated parent-children relationship, nabbed the Grand Jury prize at the 40th Sundance Film Festival, while the top honor for documentary went to "Porcelain War," about a Ukrainian couple who craft fragile, intricately painted ceramics while war rages around them. Those two awards, announced Friday in Park City, Utah, both honored directorial debuts. "In the Summers," written and directed by Alessandra Lacorazza, poetically follows an imperfect father and his daughters over nearly two decades. Lacorazza also won for directing. "To the queers, to the Latin, to the immigrants, this is for you," said Lacorazza, a Colombian American filmmaker whose film is set in Las Cruces, New Mexico. "Porcelain War," which follows last year's "20 Days in Mariupol" as a Sundance documentary prize-winner that captures the war in Ukraine, was made by Brendan Bellomo and Slava Leontyev. ***(AP)***

Man chooses to feed vices rather than tackle debts

DEAR ABBY: My very dear friend has discovered that her live-in boyfriend of two years has been hiding $55,000 in credit card debt. This man contributes very little to the household expenses (she owns the home) and barely helps to maintain it. Instead, he spends his money on alcohol and vaping products.

He refuses to share any details about his debt and doesn't like being asked about it. She has asked him to drink less and stop vaping entirely, but nothing has changed. What advice should I share with her? I don't want to hurt her feelings, but I want to give fair and honest advice.

FRIEND WHO CARES IN MAINE

DEAR FRIEND: If you want to give your friend fair and honest advice, wait to be asked for it. Do not offer it unsolicited because it will be ignored. If, however, she should ask, feel free to let her have it with both barrels. Her boyfriend is a substance abusing freeloader who is unwilling to change, and she deserves better.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My best friend, "Juliet," recently lost her months-old baby under tragic circumstances. After several months, she is now pregnant again. Abby, I'm worried. She's in her 30s and wants to live with her mother for an indefinite period after the baby is born. Juliet is still with her husband.

I don't think this is healthy. It will not only take away from the couple's independence, but also reduce Juliet's confidence in being a new mother. We are so close that we call each other soul mates. Should I say something or let her do what she thinks is right?

STANDING BY IN TENNESSEE

DEAR STANDING BY: As concerned as you are about Juliet, let her do what she thinks is right. Having lost her baby "under tragic circumstances," she needs all the emotional support she can get. If her husband is fine with that arrangement, resist the urge to interfere.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: At Christmas, I worked all day cooking a lovely turkey dinner with all the side dishes and champagne. I told my "mature adult" boyfriend that dinner would be ready at 5 p.m.

At 5 p.m., I put the (hot) food on the table and called my BF to come in. Instead of coming to the table, "Mr. Mannerless" made an (unnecessary) phone call to a woman friend and talked for nearly an hour. While the dinner got cold, I got hot! When he finally got off the phone, he grabbed a plate of food and left to watch TV. He didn't even eat with me! What should I have done?

SIMMERING IN SOUTH DAKOTA

DEAR SIMMERING: It isn't a matter of what you should have done last Christmas. The question is what you intend to do about someone as inconsiderate as the unappreciative turkey you have been dating. He may be a mature adult, but his disregard for your feelings is appalling.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

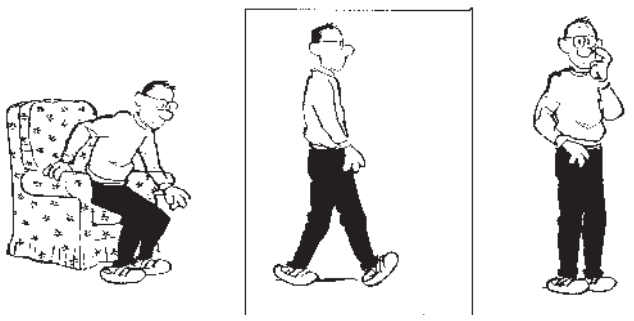
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

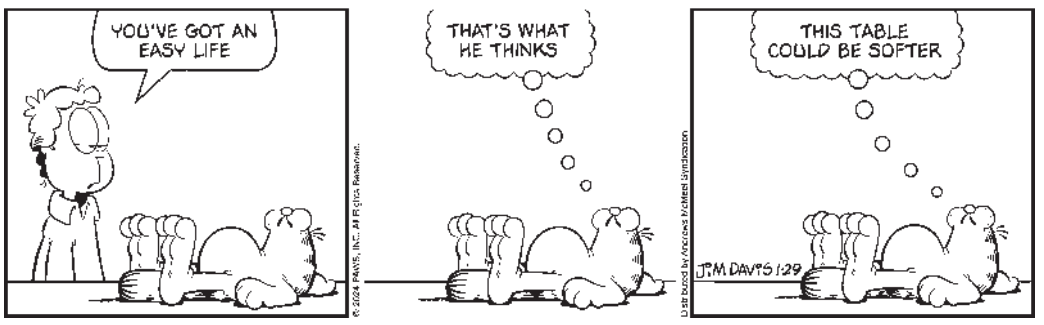
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WANNA GO FOR A WALK?
SNOW WALK? LET'S GO!
LET THE BUNDLING BEGIN!
WARM HAT! SCARF! MITTENS! SNOW WEASEL SPRAY!
SNOW WEASEL SPRAY?
I HEAR THEY'RE BAD THIS YEAR, POPS.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WORKING ON MY BACHELOR BLOG.
YOU'RE WRITING A BLOG FOR BACHELORS?
DID I STUTTER? THIS CHAPTER IS ON HOW TO IMPRESS WOMEN.
WHAT'S NEXT— HOW TO PILOT ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL HINDENBURG FLIGHT?
ONE THING AT A TIME.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

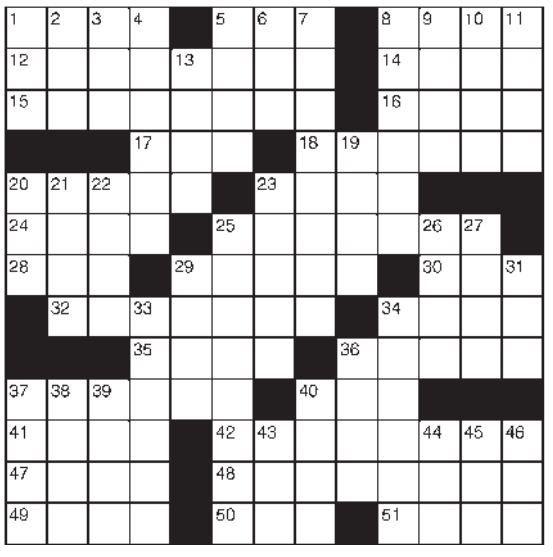
ACROSS
1 Yoga class pads
5 Rainbow
8 Salon request
12 Arm of the Pacific
14 Gushing review
15 Justin Bieber, by birth
16 Pizza cooker
17 Hwys.
18 Stopwatches
20 Campfire leftovers
23 Criminal, to cops
24 Prejudice
25 Inventive type
28 Tummy muscles
29 April forecasts
30 Aye canceler
32 Sacred places
34 Apollo's instrument
35 Comestibles
36 Jazz band section
37 Mogadishu resident
40 Jokester
41 Scratched (out)
42 Loped
47 Low-calorie
48 Set free
49 Dread
50 Time line period
51 British gun

DOWN
1 Cato's 1200
2 "Eureka!"
3 Stannum
4 Entraps
5 Unrepaired
6 Actor Stephen
7 Hikers' flasks
8 On time
9 Roof edge
10 Winnebago owner, briefly
11 Clothing store section
13 Tosses in
19 Nest egg choices
20 Lawyers' gp.
21 Sis and bro
22 Corned beef recipe
23 Snoops
25 Hymn of praise
26 Cameo stone
27 Scarce
29 Iranian money
31 "Indeed!"
33 Book club fan
34 Some beers
36 Fill fully
37 Narcissist's love
38 Tom Joad, for one
39 Prefix for physics
40 New York Liberty's org.
43 Vacuum's lack
44 Snitch
45 Tours season
46 Lair

Solution time: 21 mins.

B	U	S		R	E	B	A		K	P	O	P
I	M	P		O	R	A	N		A	E	R	O
C	A	R	H	O	R	N	S		R	C	E	D
		I	A	M	S			C	A	R	L	S
B	I	T	T	Y		S	I	I	T			
O	O	Z	E		C	A	B	L	E	C	A	R
S	T	E		J	A	N	I	S		O	L	E
C	A	R	S	E	A	T	S		E	N	I	D
			E	T	N	A		F	A	C	T	S
E	V	E	N	S			H	E	R	O		
L	E	G	O		C	L	O	W	N	C	A	R
A	G	A	R		A	A	R	F		T	H	F
N	A	N	A		L	I	A	R		S	I	X

Last Friday's Answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Sara Gilbert, 49; Heather Graham, 54; Oprah Winfrey, 70; Tom Selleck, 79.

Happy Birthday: Take the path that leads to peace of mind. Revisit contracts, update documents, search for ways to lower overhead and adjust your lifestyle to fit your budget. Consider what's important to you and discard anything you no longer need or use. Sell off items and do your best to put your money where it brings the highest returns. Added discipline will help you discover what makes you happy. Your numbers are 9, 16, 20, 29, 34, 43, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Surround yourself with supportive people. Donate time and skills to a cause that matters to you. Don't let anger stand between you and what you want. Handle others and situations gracefully, and you'll find a path forward. Discipline and patience will pay off. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: A job change may tempt you, but get what you want in writing before switching. Time spent caring for someone else's responsibilities will leave you in a precarious position. Do your own thing and make changes that benefit you. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Don't believe anything or anyone without verification. An offer will lack substance and cost you if you commit before you read the fine print. Put your time and effort into obtaining knowledge and considering how to use your skills to avoid loss. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Follow your instincts and make changes that can offer a broader use of your skills, experience and knowledge. A partnership or proposal will result in a positive lifestyle change, allow you to use your talents in unique ways, and reap rewards. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Taking a realistic approach to things will help you avoid veering off course. Consider what you need, and get rid of high-maintenance people and possessions. Put your energy where it counts, and use your intelligence and talent to outsmart others. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: You are in a better position than you realize. Change is doable if you are open to implementing something new into your routine or updating your skills and knowledge to do a better job. Be authentic; you'll gain respect and insight. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Observe what's happening around you. Don't trust others to offer an honest opinion or take care of matters that concern you. It's up to you to take responsibility and make your dreams come true. Implement changes to lower your overhead and simplify life. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Focus on how you make and use money. Discuss your plans with experts, people you trust or those affected by your decisions. Being upfront will lead to insightful conversations, allowing you to fine-tune your plans successfully and bring about a better lifestyle. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Make wise decisions. Not everything will be as it appears. Information is only as good as its source and can compromise you if you're not thorough in your investigation before you act. Focus on what you can do. ✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Forge ahead with confidence and don't look back. Take charge, follow your heart and be the master of your destiny. Implement the changes you want and use your connections to achieve your goals. A financial gain and personal improvements are forthcoming. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Refuse to let someone cost you emotionally or financially. Don't follow the crowd; be smart and take the cost-efficient route. Choose to allow your intuition to maneuver you through a tempting proposal you encounter. Say no to others, and make decisions that favor you. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: If you rely on intuition, you will figure out how to get what you want. The opportunity to advance looks good, and partnerships will help you flourish. A financial gain is apparent, but don't spend before you can make your investment work for you. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are outgoing, generous and prompt. You are astute and secretive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			2	8	1			
	4	6	3		7	1	8	
				4			5	
3	9		5	6	8	7	1	
8		4				5		
	1			7	3			
		9			5	6	2	7
	2		7			9		1
7		1			4	8	3	

Difficulty: ★ 1/29

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

6	9	4	2	8	7	3	5	1
3	2	1	6	9	5	7	8	4
5	7	8	1	4	3	6	9	2
2	4	5	7	3	6	8	1	9
7	8	9	4	1	2	5	3	6
1	6	3	8	5	9	2	4	7
4	1	7	5	6	8	9	2	3
9	5	2	3	7	4	1	6	8
8	3	6	9	2	1	4	7	5

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/26

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

RARE EARTHS Solution: 4 letters

C	L	M	U	I	R	T	T	Y	R	T	N	U	O	C
H	H	A	T	E	N	G	A	M	D	L	A	S	E	R
P	O	E	R	E	S	C	I	E	N	C	E	A	S	D
R	Y	L	M	E	M	O	P	F	N	O	O	M	C	E
O	R	E	M	I	N	O	P	I	R	O	N	A	I	F
M	L	N	O	I	S	I	V	E	L	E	T	R	M	E
E	E	T	C	I	U	T	M	L	R	A	E	I	A	N
T	W	A	T	O	M	M	R	D	L	I	N	U	R	S
H	E	B	T	H	E	O	R	Y	A	A	O	M	E	E
I	J	L	A	T	E	M	S	T	T	T	T	D	C	R
U	Y	E	L	E	E	T	S	U	R	Ⓛ	S	A	I	O
M	O	M	U	I	P	O	R	U	Ⓔ	A	P	U	X	C
P	L	A	N	T	H	A	N	Ⓤ	M	S	D	I	R	K
F	L	I	N	T	L	S	Ⓕ	P	O	W	D	E	R	C
B	A	T	T	E	R	Y	L	U	T	E	T	I	U	M

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Alloy, Atom, Battery, Catalyst, Ceramics, Chemistry, Country, Crust, Defense, Deposit, Element, Europium, Field, Flint, Fuel, Holmium, Ionic, Iron, Jewelry, Lanthanum, Laser, Lutetium, Magnet, Metal, Mineral, Moon, Natural, Oxide, Periodic, Powder, Promethium, Rock, Samarium, Science, Space, Steel, Stone, Table, Television, Theory, Trade, Yttrium

Last Friday's Answer: Lesson

To purchase **WONDERWORD** books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Sabalenka wins second straight title, beating Qinwen, 6-3, 6-2

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—In the back of her mind Aryna Sabalenka didn't want to be, in her words, that player who wins a major title and disappears.

Winning her first Grand Slam crown in Australia a year ago gave Sabalenka the confidence she could do it again. Losing the U.S. Open final last September gave her the extra motivation.

Sabalenka ensured she wasn't a one-hit wonder by clinching back-to-back Australian Open titles with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Zheng Qinwen on Saturday in a one-sided women's final that contrasted sharply with her comeback three-set victory here over Elena Rybakina last year.

"I just wanted to show that I'm able to be consistently there and I'm able to win another one," the 25-year-old from Belarus said. "So compared to last year, it's a completely different me. Compared to the U.S. Open, once again, it's a different me; I'm more controlled and kind of like don't let the rest of the things come to my mind."

In 2022, Sabalenka struggled so badly with her serve in tense moments that she doubted she could win a major. Now she's relying on it to break down opponents. She didn't serve a double-fault in the final, and she didn't face a break point.

No. 2-seeded Sabalenka set the tone with big, deep forehands and converted service breaks early in each set against the 21-year-old Zheng, who was making her debut in a Grand Slam final.

The journey and the destination were equally important for Sabalenka.

In the semifinals, she avenged her U.S. Open final loss to No. 4-ranked Coco Gauff with a straight-set win. That followed straight-sets wins over 2021 French Open winner Barbora Krejcikova in the quarterfinals and Amanda Anisimova in the fourth round.

"I'm definitely a different person and a player and I have more experience playing the last stages of the Grand Slams," Sabalenka said, reflecting on the last 13 months. "There was some tough moments for me losing the U.S. Open final — that loss actually motivated me so much to work even harder."

And that, she said, gave her more confidence in her game and more self-belief.

"The first one is always special because I feel like it's more emotional," she said. "For the second time, it's just such a relief."

Only two things slowed down Sabalenka's progress Saturday to her second Grand Slam singles title.

In the third game of the second set, with Zheng serving, the match was interrupted after an activist started yelling out. The match continued after the man was escorted out by security.

Then, when she was serving for the match, Sabalenka had three championship points at 40-0 but missed two with unforced forehands errors and another with Zheng's clever drop shot.

After giving Zheng a break-point chance, she bounced the ball away behind her in disgust. But she recovered her composure to win the next three points.

Sabalenka is the first woman since Victoria Azarenka in 2012 and '13 to win back-to-back Australian Open titles, and the fifth since 2000 to win the championship here without dropping a set — a group that includes Serena Williams.

She credited her support team for keeping her on track, and making sure she enjoyed the moment. Sabalenka made a habit of slapping and autographing the bald head of her fitness trainer, Jason Stacy, before each match in Australia.

After the final, Stacy, wearing a shirt with the message "Simplicity is the key to brilliance" printed on the back, held the trophy on the court as Sabalenka huddled with her team in a victory celebration.

A decade after Li Na held the Australian Open trophy aloft, Zheng made her best run in nine majors to date. She said during the tournament that she felt well-supported in Melbourne because of the big Chinese community. And that played out for the final, where the flags waved and she had the crowd behind her.

But she was playing an opponent ranked in the top 50 for the first time in this tournament.

It was the second time in as many majors their paths had met in the second week; Sabalenka beat Zheng in the U.S. Open quarterfinals last year.

Zheng's push to the final was two rounds better than her previous best run to the quarterfinals in New York last September.

She was the first player in four decades to advance through six rounds without playing anyone ranked in the top 50—and was only the third in the Open era to reach a major final without facing a seeded player.

The step up against No. 2-ranked Sabalenka proved too much.

"I didn't perform my best. That's really pity for me, because I really want to show better than that," Zheng said. "I think I can learn more with the loss today. And then I just hope next time I can come back as a better tennis player and come back, yeah, stronger."

AP

Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus holds the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup after defeating Zheng Qinwen of China in the women's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024.

Unflappable so far, Sinner prepares for his first major final

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—One thing people have noticed about Jannik Sinner is how unflappable he's been on his run to the Australian Open final. And the big smile.

In the semifinals against 10-time title-winner Novak Djokovic, who had never lost a match after reaching the last four in Australia, Sinner won the first two sets quickly, absorbed the 24-time major champion's comeback and then won it in four.

He didn't face a break point. He didn't get ruffled by a noisy Rod Laver Arena crowd, or overawed by the occasion. Or what was on the line: a first major final.

That's unlikely to change when he takes on 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev, a two-time runner-up at Melbourne Park, in the championship match on Sunday.

Sinner missed a match point in the tiebreaker against Djokovic—the only set he lost in six rounds—and 55 minutes later, with the umpire having to call for quiet for the third time in one game, Sinner served for another.

He hit a forehand winner to finish it off, and as the chair umpire announced "Game, Set and Match: Sinner," the 22-year-old Italian quietly held his arms up and only then began to grin.

Sinner couldn't contain a bigger smile, his eyes lighting up, but he walked calmly to the net to greet Djokovic in a way that seemed like he didn't want to rub it in.

No histrionics. Just pleased to advance. Asked later if it was difficult to keep his celebrations in check, Sinner said he certainly was feeling "these kind of emotions you cannot control."

"You celebrate because this is the emotion what you are feeling now," he explained. "Obviously it means so much to me to beat Novak here in Melbourne, but in the other way, I know that the tournament is not over.

"Sunday is a final. It's different emotions. In my mind today I knew it was semifinal. It's not that you win the tournament like this. So I'm looking forward for Sunday, and let's see what's coming."

Medvedev became the first man since Pete Sampras in 1995 to reach the Australian Open final with two comebacks from two sets down, having been two points from defeat before beating Alexander Zverev 5-7, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5), 6-3.

That earned him a spot in a sixth major final.

Sinner, in his 17th Grand Slam tournament, is the first Italian to reach an Australian Open singles final. His run has been compared by some with Roger Federer's first title. The Swiss great hadn't reached the semifinals in his first 16 majors, then he won Wimbledon.

Sinner may not have been a globally recognized player when he lost in the Wimbledon semifinals last year to Djokovic, but his two subsequent wins over the world No. 1 in November at the ATP Finals in Turin and in the Davis Cup semifinals certainly raised his profile.

It also helped that he had the Carota Boys behind him after the Italian Open in May. What began as a spur-of-the-moment idea among six of his supporters to dress up as carrots has turned into a traveling fan club, featuring at all four Slams now since a trip to Australia this month.

The carrot idea is partly a tribute to Sinner's red-orange hair and how he ate carrots instead of the more common bananas during a changeover at a tournament in 2019.

Sinner's game has evolved since an overhaul of his coaching in 2022, when he reached quarterfinals in Australia, at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open.

Darren Cahill, the Australian who helped Andre Agassi, Lleyton Hewitt and Simona Halep regain or reach the top ranking, spotted Sinner's talent while doing TV commentary a few years ago, and noted he could be a potential world No. 1.

The sound of the ball when Sinner hit it, because of his timing and hand speed, was the giveaway, Cahill said, and it reminded him of the unique sounds of the likes of Agassi, Djokovic and Rafael Nadal.

Cahill had joined to offer a big-picture perspective and says "99% of the credit for the coaching" goes to Simone Vagnozzi. There's also been a lot more focus on fitness and nutrition with Umberto Ferrara and Giacomo Naldi.

"There was certainly from a tennis perspective areas of Jannik's game—he was already a great player, you can't be top 10 without having the platform of some incredible weapons, and he had those," Cahill said. But "I think the natural progression that Jannik needed to make everybody could see."

Vagnozzi said Sinner's game at the time was high level, but slightly predictable.

"One style. Was just pushing hard and without so many tactics," Vagnozzi said. "So now he can play with his speed but knowing where to put the ball, when to play drop shot, when to play slice."

Cahill said Sinner possesses the qualities that the other major winners he's worked with have had, and something else important.

"Work ethic, purpose, desire, willingness to learn, tennis IQ of all those champions is fantastic," he said. "Jannik has all that."

And, a sense of humor, Cahill added. "He's a good guy, and he's a fun-loving guy.

"He's got the qualities I believe that a lot of the great champions in the game have, but you've got to start winning to let that come to fruition."

LeBron triple-double leads Lakers in 2OT thriller vs. Warriors

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—LeBron James made a pair of free throws with 1.2 seconds left in the second overtime to cap his triple-double of 36 points, 20 rebounds and 12 assists, outdueling Stephen Curry as the Los Angeles Lakers held off the Golden State Warriors 145-144 on Saturday night.

Curry hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 4.7 seconds left in the second OT and made another over Anthony Davis with 1:22 to go on the way to 46 points with a season-high nine 3s.

D'Angelo Russell connected from deep with 53 seconds left in the second OT and also hit another earlier in the period after also making two 3-pointers late in regulation on the way to 28 points.

James scored 12 points in the two OT periods and recorded his third triple-double of the season and 110th of his career. Davis added 29 points and 13 rebounds.

Klay Thompson hit a tying 3 with 5.9 seconds remaining in the initial overtime and another late in the second extra period before fouling out with 1:14 left in Golden State's first double-OT game since a 143-141 victory against Atlanta on Jan. 2, 2023.

Davis returned after an injury scare in the third. He made a pair of free throws with 29 seconds to go in regulation, then missed the first of two with 14.7 seconds left—giving Golden State the ball down 118-116. Curry drove through the paint for a tying layup with just under 6 seconds left to force overtime.

These star-studded teams played another thrilling game after the Lakers beat the Warriors in a six-game Western Conference semifinals last year.

Curry notched his second straight game with six or more 3s and third in five and also his fifth consecutive game with 25 or more points. It was his third 40-point performance this season and 65th of his career.

James and Davis combined to shoot 14 for 19 in the first half and wound up 25 of 49 for the night and contributed to a 55-50 rebounding edge.

The Warriors scored a season high points and their 23 3-pointers were a season best. Golden State used its 15th starting lineup—with Draymond Green and Jonathan Kuminga on the floor for the opening tip together for the first time this season.

AP

Golden State Warriors forward Jonathan Kuminga, left, tries to block Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, right, during the first half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, in San Francisco.

Kuminga followed up his career-best 31-point performance Thursday with 22 points on a night Thompson missed his initial five 3-point attempts and was 1 for 10 before connecting on two 3s midway through the third. Kuminga has scored 20 or more points in a career-best six straight games.

James scored the final seven points of the first half as the Lakers led 68-63 at the break. They began 1 of 7 after the break before Russell's 3 at the 8:05 mark.

This was another wild one for the Warriors after Golden State lost 134-133 to Sacramento on Thursday night in another 2023 playoff rematch. The Warriors eliminated the Kings in Game 7 of their first-round matchup.

Thompson played in his 758th career game to move past the late Nate Thurmond and into sole possession of fifth place on the Warriors' all-time list.

Golden State has played in an NBA-leading 32 clutch games.

NUGGETS 111, 76ERS 105

DENVER (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 26 points and 16 rebounds, but was denied his rematch with fellow MVP contender Joel Embiid when Denver fended off short-handed but gritty Philadelphia.

Philadelphia's star center missed a game at Denver for a fourth consecutive season after the team's medical staff determined he shouldn't play on his balky left knee.

Jamal Murray added 23 points for Denver and Michael Porter Jr. had 20. Paul Reed led Philadelphia with a career-best 30 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. had 25.

The 76ers scratched Embiid minutes before tipoff after he had discomfort in his troublesome left knee during warmups. It denied basketball fans another marquee matchup between the last two NBA MVPs.

KINGS 120, MAVERICKS 115

DALLAS (AP)—De'Aaron Fox scored 34 points and Sacramento beat Dallas, with Mavericks star Luka Doncic finishing with 28 points, 17 assists and 10 rebounds a night after scoring a franchise-record 73 points in a win at Atlanta.

Harrison Barnes had 20 points, Kevin Huerter added 18 and Domantas Sabonis had 17 points and a game-high 11 rebounds as the Kings won their third straight following a season-worst four-game losing streak.

The Mavericks split their back-to-back, having won 148-143 at Atlanta on Friday night when Doncic tied for the fourth most points in a game in NBA history behind only Wilt Chamberlain and Kobe Bryant.

CLIPPERS 115, CELTICS 96

BOSTON (AP)—Kawhi Leonard scored 26 points in only 29 minutes and Los Angeles routed Boston.

Paul George added 17 points for the Clippers, who used a 21-0 run in the third quarter to win their fifth straight and avenge a 37-point home loss to Boston in December. Leonard, George and the rest of the starters sat out the fourth quarter.

It was the most-lopsided loss of the season for Boston, which lost for just the second time at home after starting the season 20-0 at TD Garden.

Jayson Tatum led Boston with 21 points. The Celtics shot 35% from the field.

BUCKS 141, PELICANS 117

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points and 12 rebounds in Milwaukee's blowout victory New Orleans.

Damian Lillard added 26 points, nine assists and six rebounds. Brook Lopez scored 24 points with 6-for-9 shooting from 3-point range, and Bobby Portis had 20 points.

The Bucks shot 56% as they improved to 2-1 in their third and final game with Joe Prunty as interim head coach following the firing of Adrian Griffin. Doc Rivers held his introductory news conference as Griffin's permanent replacement Saturday.

Brandon Ingram scored 26 points for New Orleans.

SPURS 113, TIMBERWOLVES 112

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Devin Vassell had 25 points, Victor Wembanyama added 23 points and 10 rebounds and San Antonio rallied to beat Minnesota.

Anthony Edwards had 32 points and 12 rebounds for Minnesota, and Rudy Gobert and Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 points each. Towns missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer as the Timberwolves had a two-game winning streak snapped.

Officials halted play two minutes into the game when a bat descended on the court seconds after Wembanyama made a 3-pointer.

The Spurs' mascot, The Coyote, captured the bat with a net after numerous failed attempts, much to the delight of Wembanyama and Jeremy Sochan. The Coyote had previously corralled two bats, and Manu Ginobili swatted another to the court with his bare hand in November 2009.

KNICKS 125, HEAT 109

NEW YORK (AP)—Jalen Brunson had 32 points and eight assist and New York beat Miami, winning its sixth straight and sending the Heat to a sixth consecutive loss.

Julius Randle added 19 points and nine rebounds for the Knicks, but left with 4:27 remaining after landing hard on his right shoulder when Jaime Jaquez Jr. stepped in front of him trying to take a charge on Randle's drive to the basket.

Coach Tom Thibodeau said after the game that he knew only that Randle was being checked by the medical staff and didn't know the nature of the injury.

OG Anunoby also had 19 points for the Knicks, who improved to 12-2 this month after he made his first start on New Year's Day.

Jimmy Butler scored 28 points for Miami.

WIZARDS 118, PISTONS 104

DETROIT (AP)—Kyle Kuzma scored 30 points and Washington beat Detroit for Wizards interim coach Brian Keefe's first victory.

Keefe lost his first game Thursday, hours after Wes Unseld Jr. was moved to the Wizards' front office. Jordan Poole added 17 points to help Washington end a six-game losing streak.

Bojan Bogdanovic led Detroit with 30 points.

JAZZ 134, HORNETS 122

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Lauri Markkanen had 33 points and 12 rebounds and Utah beat Charlotte for its 11th victory in 15 games.

Collin Sexton added 24 points and 13 assists. The Jazz shot 56% from the field, made 17 3-pointers and built 36-point lead in the third quarter.

P.J. Washington tied a career high with 43 points—31 in the second half—and Nick Richards added a career-best 26 to go with 13 rebounds for Charlotte.

NETS 106, ROCKETS 104

NEW YORK (AP)—Cam Thomas scored 37 points and Brooklyn outlasted Houston to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Nets led by 28 points in the second quarter, with the Rockets rallying to cut it to one with seconds left.

Mikal Bridges and Dorian Finney-Smith each had 19 points for Brooklyn. Jalen Green, Dillan Brooks and Cam Whitmore each had 19 points for the Rockets. They have lost seven of their last 10 games.

Sources: NBA Commissioner Adam Silver finalizing contract extension

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver is about to celebrate his 10th anniversary in office. It will not be his last.

Silver is finalizing an extension to remain as commissioner of the NBA for several more years, a person with knowledge of the agreement said Saturday night. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because no announcement from the league had been made.

ESPN, which first reported the agreement, said Silver's new deal will stretch "through the end of the decade." It's the second time the league's owners have approved an extension for Silver, who also got one in June 2018 that had him under contract through the end of this season's NBA Finals.

Silver became commissioner on Feb. 1, 2014, officially succeeding former Commissioner David Stern—his mentor. That move had been in the works for years; Stern officially announced his retirement more than a year earlier and the Board of Governors unanimously approved the plan to have Silver, the longtime deputy commissioner, take over.

"He's been a great leader who built on David's legacy and really turned us in to a major multinational organization," said Mark Cuban, who until recently had been the primary owner of the Dallas Mavericks.

And the league has seen enormous success under Silver, who has overseen the ratification of two Collective Bargaining Agreements between the league and its players since he became commissioner—he also was the lead negotiator, then as deputy commissioner, when the NBA and its players struck a deal in 2011. The most recent CBA went into effect this season, ensuring labor peace in the NBA for several more years at minimum. ***(AP)***

Rocball completes 2 rounds of competition

After 10 games and two rounds of completion that ended last Jan. 19, there were 122 two-point aces served, 13 two-point xunk serves, a one-point jam awarded for spiking down a served ball, eight two-point backcourt plays kees made by a team's goalie, and 27 three-point goals scored.

Yeshqiah Coleman of Team Topshakaz was the top player after the two rounds of play were completed. Yeshqiah scored several one-point court plays, five two-point aces, three two-point xunk serves, a two-point backcourt kee, and a three-point goal.

The only type of scoring technique Yeshqiah hasn't done so far is to have jammed or spiked down a served ball. And, that is the most difficult play to make in the sport of Roccball. In other noteworthy scoring plays, Paulo Surimer of Border Control scored five aces, Mokang Kim of Bolley Ballerz scored a jam, and Jerome Manzon of Baddie Z scored five goals.

In team statistics, Topshakaz has the best servers, scoring 21 two-point aces and four two-point xunks. The team goalies of Topshakaz, Border Control and Quest have each scored one two- point backcourt plays, the Bolley Ballerz are the only team to record a one-point jam, and Nesian Power, Border Control, Bolley Ballerz, and Baddie Z have all scored four three-point goals in two games. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Teams Topshakaz and Chagi Fahn pose with Rocball founder James Feger at the Marianas High School indoor Rocball court.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Erica Zandueta of the Aces In Rocball served four two-point aces in her first Rocball game of the season. Zandueta's four Aces was the best performance of a player rotating into the server's position among all the other male and female players of 10 teams in Rocball's first round of competition.

Pacifica Insurance takes swing at higher education with $5K hole-in-one donation at NMC Golf Open

In support of funding higher education in the CNMI, Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. recently donated $5,000 to the Northern Marianas College Foundation for the upcoming Golf Open on March 23 and 24, 2024 as a hole-in-one prize on top of $1,500 in Education Tax Credit.

"Education is the key to unlocking success. It breaks barriers and creates traction. It is the one thing that no one can take away from us and I encourage everyone to climb higher with it by starting smart and starting at NMC," said Pacifica Insurance president and CEO Shirley Sablan. "Let's get excited and create momentum for the upcoming NMC Golf Open as proceeds will benefit the highlyanticipated state-of-the-art campus that the PROA family has been working long and hard for."

NMC's tournament will be a two-day event and the tournament fee for the 2024 golf open is $250.

"On behalf of NMC's Foundation, we're truly grateful to Pacifica Insurance for their commitment to lasting impact in higher education," said Ben Babauta, chairperson of the NMC Foundation.

The tournament, which is also the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds to build and equip modern, innovative campus facilities that will help expand the CNMI's workforce development efforts, stimulate economic growth, and provide access to quality education for the residents of the CNMI.

Interested companies and individuals who would like to help the college with its rebuilding efforts can donate educational tax credit, cash, or in-kind contributions by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf or by contacting Helen Camacho at helen.camacho@marianas.edu, Raynard Travilla at raynard.travilla@marianas.edu, or Miguel Dandan at miguel.dandan@marianas.edu.

Golfers who would like to register for the upcoming tournament can also visit www.marianas.edu/golf. Only online payments are accepted for this upcoming golf open.

For more updates, follow Northern Marianas College on Facebook and Instagram (nmc.proa) or visit www.marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

NMC

Northern Marianas College president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero leads the NMC team in accepting the $5,000 Educational Tax Credit donation from Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. for this year's NMC Golf Open.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Denn Biscocho of Spicy Locals scored a three-point goal in an overtime set to help his team defeat Aces In Rocball. An overtime set can be won by a predetermined amount of points or by scoring a goal, whichever comes first. Biscocho scored a goal on the second play in their overtime set against the Aces.

NMIFA

From page 20

FC, Matansa FC, MP United, Latte FC, Shirley's FC, Piare FC—along with the boy's/men's and girl's/women's national teams, and NMIFA executive committee and board members were in attendance at the luncheon.

The luncheon gave the clubs in attendance a chance to say their well wishes and parting gifts such as jerseys, gift baskets, among others.

NMIFA president Jerry Tan attributed the FA's success to Mita and said that he was a "game-changer."

Tan said the NMIFA facility in Koblerville was one contribution to NMIFA's success, but that Mita was the "biggest game-changer. When you build a facility, it takes money. If you don't have money, you can borrow, just like business. But when it comes to the program, when it comes to coaching, when it comes to really impacting not just the national team but also to the community—that one is not something you can buy with money. Even if AFC gives us a million dollars, we cannot say 'Oh, in the next three years, we're going to improve,' Money doesn't translate into success. It is the program. It is an individual like coach Mita. He put his heart into our community into our boys and girls from Day 1 and every day."

Mita, at the end of the well wishes and gifts, gave an emotional speech in which he said he was the "luckiest person in the world." He said, "It was an incredible journey together with you guys. In these seven years, we have achieved many things because of you guys. I learned so much from you and I was just very lucky these past seven years. I have worked with many other member associations in other countries, but I can say NMIFA is the best member association."

He then thanked everyone and said, "NMI is always in my heart. Someday, I want to come back here as a coach again. Thank you Jerry, for your leadership. I learned a lot from you. I've never seen a president who's so passionate. You guys are so lucky."

At the end of the luncheon, Mita was asked how he felt about the surprise party and said he had no idea about it. "It was a big surprise. I didn't know. I thought we were just going to have lunch." When asked what his favorite memory is, he said, "Everything. They're all good memories."

REDS

From page 20

brera, Paul Salalila, and Julian Salalila. Another run scored in the third for a 4-0 Blue Jays lead and they were on the hunt for more.

The Reds could not seem to score, falling from strikeouts by strikeout king Kevin Kapileo, and it seemed that they wouldn't get a run in. The Blue Jays added to their tally in the fourth with three more runs, for a 7-0 lead.

However, after seven unanswered runs, the Reds' lumber came to life in the fifth inning. They scored eight runs after a Blue Jays' pitching change and in a change of the tide, led by one run, 8-7.

It wasn't over yet as the Blue Jays took the lead again in the sixth when they scored two runs, 9-8, but the Reds never give up attitude gave them the extra boost when they scored a much needed three runs to once again be in the lead, 11-9.

That was it for the see-saw of runs as the Blue Jays failed to get the lead back and they settled with the loss after they scored just one more run.

The Reds' Hector Efraim led the charge with two hits from three at-bats, scored one run, and collected two RBIs. Shawn Matsutaro helped him out by also bringing in two RBIs and one run.

In last Wednesday's game, the Marlins won via a 30-14 blowout against the Spartans.

ACS

From page 20

In other results, Chacha Ocean View Middle School II danced their way to a win against Dandan Middle School II, 21-12, 21-15; FMS II fought hard against Saipan International School II and won in three sets, 18-21, 21-12, 15-9; Tanapag Middle School II swam past Hopwood Middle School II, 21-12, 21-14; DMS beat COVMS, 21-15, 21-13; and HMS edged Saipan Community School, 22-20; 21-15.

Sabalenka wins second straight title, beating Qinwen, 6-3, 6-2

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Rocball completes 2 rounds of competition.

PAGE 19

NMIFA bids coach Mita *sayonara*

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Northern Mariana Islands Football Association bid national team head coach/technical director Michiteru Mita goodbye in a surprise farewell luncheon last Saturday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

LEIGH GASES

NMI national soccer teams pose with outgoing national team head coach/technical director, Michiteru Mita, front row, eighth from right, during his surprise farewell luncheon at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Saturday.

Mita's tenure was almost seven years from his arrival to the NMI on Feb. 19, 2017 and has led NMIFA to many successes and milestones. He's leaving today, Jan. 29, 2024, for Myanmar to coach the U15 and U17 boys national team and become the youth director.

A video of Mita's successes was shown, with such successes such as: he created a comprehensive guide for NMIFA member clubs, outlining the progression of youth players from U6 and U18 divisions; established a systematic approach to monitor and evaluate the ongoing development of youth players; documented and developed NMIFA grassroots program, seeking official recognition from the Asian Football Confederation to qualify for technical and financial support; created a pathway for training and certification of local coaches; implemented a program offering financial incentives and technical support; significantly contributed to the enhancement of NMI national teams; and successfully collaborated with Japan Football Association, securing technical and financial support for training camps in Japan, among many others.

After, a video message was shown, with messages from Kiyoshi Sekiguchi, former NMIFA technical director and national team head coach; Kohtaro Goto, Dev Bachani, Jerald Aquino, and Merrick Toves, off-island national team players; Norman Del Rosario, former NMIFA executive committee member; Catherine Attao-Toves, NMIFA executive committee member; coach Jimmy Tang, NMI women's team assistant coach; and Luam Khen Kho, NMI women's national team coach.

LEIGH GASES

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association executive committee members and staff, along with NMIFA president Jerry Tan, fifth from left, pose with outgoing national team head coach/technical director, Michiteru Mita, sixth from left, during his surprise farewell luncheon at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Saturday.

NMIFA's football clubs—Kanoa

See NMIFA on Page 19

ACS kickstarts MS boys v-ball with win

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Last season's runner-up Agape Christian School Torchbearers middle school boys volleyball team kick-started the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2023-2024 on a high note last Thursday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

They faced off against Francisco M. Sablan Middle School Napu Riders that went on to be a three-set nail-biter.

ACS, led by main hitter Daniel Yang, ambushed the Napu Riders early on for a swift first set win, 21-16.

However, when ACS thought they had the game in the bag, FMS attacked back with a flurry of kills by Jairoh Guilas and Jairus Pangilinan in the second set for a close 21-19 win and forced a tie-breaking third.

It was a back-and-forth of points for both teams in the final set, with none ever too far in the lead, but ACS ebbed and flowed like one unit as the Napu Riders carried on with their second set momentum. ACS then hit a sweet spot in their game and took it all the way home before FMS could regroup, 15-11.

The ACS team with Yang includes Raffy Cai, Danny Cheng, Reyviel Escarlan, Joseph Yang, Benny Li, Daniel Huang, Scott Shi, Benjamin Cai, and Andy Chen.

FMS was made up of Guilas, Pangilinan, Michael Elayda, Kyle Tabenas, Xiaolin Guo, Sean Morilla, Frank Lumanlan, and Keith Agulto.

See ACS on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Agape Christian School's Daniel Yang sets up for a return between two Francisco M. Sablan Middle School defenders during the first set of their first season match of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2023-2024 last Thursday night at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Reds win two in a row

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Reds have won two straight games for a record of six wins and three losses in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

Their recent conquest was against the Blue Jays, in a close 11-10 game last Tuesday, and last Jan. 19, they beat the Marlins, 14-11 at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

In their game against the Blue Jays, they were shot down from the sky again as they blew yet another lead toward the end of the game.

The Reds went scoreless for four straight innings, giving the Blue Jays an early lead.

The Blue Jays drew first blood in the second inning as they scored three runs from Manny Ca-

See REDS on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Reds' Hector Efraim waits for a pitch during their game against the Blue Jays last Tuesday in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.